

# THE CLOTHWORKERS' FOUNDATION

EVALUATION OF THE PROACTIVE  
DRAMATIC ARTS GRANTS INITIATIVE

*Executive summary*



# Executive Summary

The Clothworkers' Foundation (TCF) aims to make “game-changing” interventions by providing opportunities for people who experience disadvantage. It set up the Dramatic Arts Initiative with the intention to address some of the issues challenging the success of the UK theatre industry. The Initiative rose out of a conviction that young individuals are empowered through the arts and that those who are talented can benefit from inspirational teachers and life enhancing experiences. Thus, it is important to invest in the talent pipeline so that talented young individuals have the best opportunity possible to enter the business.

Disadvantage and lack of opportunity pose the greatest threat to the talent pipeline in important sectors of the UK economy such as the creative and cultural industries, especially through the current marginalisation of creative subjects by the education system which is potentially damaging the career and life opportunities of young people, and threatening the continuing success of one of the UK's most innovative and productive industry sectors.

The Dramatic Arts Initiative ran from 2014 to 2018 across two strands. The Bursary strand supported 25 individuals to study with RADA, LAMDA and the NYT or to further their studies and creative careers through the SOLT Laurence Olivier Awards. The second strand, the Regional Theatre Awards, provided five regional theatres across England with £150,000 each over five years to develop new work, young talent and community relationships, in line with the Foundation's broader purposes.

## Delivering successfully

This evaluation and impact assessment demonstrate how the Dramatic Arts Initiative was successful in meeting the original objectives of The Clothworkers' Foundation. The investment in the Dramatic Arts Initiative was intended to achieve the following.

### *Make a difference*

The Dramatic Arts Initiative has made a difference to the how talent is cultivated and developed (the talent pipeline) by providing new opportunities for a wider range of disadvantaged people. Bursary recipients shared common difficulties resulting from low income or a lack of financial support: the Dramatic Arts Initiative has supported people who are held back in their progress through coming from working class backgrounds, being of different ethnicities or having disabilities. The impact and depth of engagement of supporting individuals throughout their study has made a significant difference to the opportunities for each of the bursary holders, which can be seen in some of the critical successes illustrated by case studies in the report.

The Regional Theatre Awards have enabled greater breadth of engagement in deprived communities, providing opportunities for young, disadvantaged people and people with disabilities to discover theatre-making. These Awards provided support and filled the gap left in careers service and advice for young people leaving statutory education by offering

non-academic routes into the creative industries via training and in some cases employment.

### *Game-changing opportunities for individuals*

In particular, the Bursaries have:

- Enabled 25 participants from diverse or disadvantaged backgrounds to study for qualifications in many aspects of theatre-making in the UK's most prestigious drama schools.
- Provided guaranteed, fair financial support to the bursary holders.
- Helped guarantee financial stability over a five-year period for drama school partner organisations.

### *A catalyst for sustainable development*

The Regional Theatre Awards have:

- Enabled theatres to generate audiences who are new to the experience of live theatre.
- Enabled the creation of new work and productions.
- Allowed regional theatres to reach out into new communities in meaningful and sustainable ways.

### *Effective and efficient*

The process and management of the Dramatic Arts Initiative has been effective for both The Clothworkers' Foundation and the partner organisations. The light-touch and personal engagement and involvement of The Clothworkers' Foundation Panel Members and Trustees has been valued and particularly appreciated by bursary holders and theatres.

In strategic terms, the Dramatic Arts Initiative has made a helpful contribution to some of the key priorities which need to be addressed by the theatre industry and the wider cultural sector in order for it to become a more inclusive and representative sector, and to ensure that talent on- and off-stage is nurtured, regardless of background, income or other barriers.

The Dramatic Arts Initiative is a step in acknowledging the barriers created by disadvantage and recognising the scale of need and size of the social inequality issue affecting the UK now. The Clothworkers' Foundation could consider how the changes that this initiative has sparked can be extended and expanded to create a critical mass and increase impact and reach.

### *Taking it forward*

Based on the success of the Dramatic Arts Initiative to date, we recommend that the Dramatic Arts Initiative is extended for a further five years to build on this progress and sustain the momentum gathered by the partner organisations.

Following from that key recommendation, we also propose that The Clothworkers' Foundation:

- consider increasing the investment made by increasing the number of individual Bursaries available through the partner organisations, as this has had the greatest short to medium-term impact in creating value for individuals and wider benefits for the theatre industry. More emphasis on Bursaries to develop theatre technical skills would help in addressing industry shortages and open up extensive employment opportunities.
- continue to invest in industry bodies and organisations that can develop career and talent pathways countrywide, strengthening the partnership with the NYT in particular, and widening the talent pipeline by opening it up to disadvantaged people – the most significant barrier to progress is a lack of financial support or access to finances for study or training.
- build on the very successful interpersonal contact and support that everyone has benefited from, to create a cohort of advocates, supporters and mentors, most particularly for the benefit of the individuals. Bringing together past and current recipients with the partner organisations would create a greater community that can share organisational learning, disseminate and celebrate outcomes and impacts, support each other, and very importantly provide models and people who have “been before us”.
- review the focus of the Regional Theatre Awards. The Awards did not achieve the same successful strategic impacts or return on investment as the Bursaries. Although this strand led to a breadth of engagement for some communities and audiences, in most cases the sustainability of such initiatives is uncertain. The Clothworkers' Foundation might consider whether the Awards should be reiterated at all. Should the decision be made to continue with a regional theatre strand, it is recommended that the Foundation review the focus, so that its investment is strategically directed to support specific initiatives by regional organisations and theatres that run active, innovative and inclusive programmes in areas of deprivation, rather than being award focused. The Regional Theatre Awards could be more directly linked to existing programmes being rolled out by current partners like NYT or SOLT/UK Theatre, to optimise the speed at which change can be made and avoid duplication.
- make the Awards criteria clearer: to strategically develop creative talent and potential; support projects relevant to communities and people not usually represented on or off-stage; and consolidate existing programmes

that extend reach and broaden engagement, participation and opportunities for theatre-making and careers in the cultural sector.

- facilitate partnerships between participating theatres; as with the Bursaries, there is a valuable opportunity to work with partners to create effective networks that enable theatres to collaborate, learn from each other and develop sustainable partnerships, such as touring work created through the Awards, extending the reach and life of the work.
- monitor progress, tracking longitudinal impacts. A formative evaluation framework should be put in place with any extension or development of the Dramatic Arts Initiative and a suitable budget allocated as part of the core costs. Ongoing evaluation and reflection would enable The Clothworkers' Foundation to understand the successes and impacts as they are emerging, see how the investment is delivering results as the Initiative rolls out, and if necessary adjust or change elements. As well as a dynamic planning and monitoring tool, it would enable the impacts and learning to be brought together and enable an effective dissemination strategy so that the cultural sector benefits.
- invest in the Grants team, so that in periods of intense activity there is flexibility to increase capacity or contract expertise to support the team, particularly with regard to the recommendations around creating a cohort and learning community for the Bursaries and Regional Theatre Awards, and changes in the application process.

# THE CLOTHWORKERS' FOUNDATION

EVALUATION OF THE  
PROACTIVE DRAMATIC  
ARTS GRANTS  
INITIATIVE

*Sarah Bedell and Pam Jarvis*

*September 2019*



## CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	3
Delivering successfully .....	3
Introduction.....	7
Why the dramatic arts?.....	7
Goals of the Dramatic Arts Initiative .....	8
Key questions for this evaluation.....	8
Methodology .....	9
The UK Theatre Industry: context for the Dramatic Arts Initiative.....	11
The Clothworkers’ Foundation Bursaries .....	15
Review of bursary schemes and initiatives .....	15
Impacts on individuals .....	17
Criteria for success for individual bursary holders.....	18
Findings: individual bursary holders.....	19
Barriers and constraints.....	25
Impacts of the programme on partner organisations .....	27
Findings.....	28
The Clothworkers’ Foundation Regional Theatre Awards.....	35
Review of issues facing regional theatres .....	35
Regional Theatre Awards: outcomes and impacts.....	37
Regional Theatre Awards: unsuccessful applicants.....	48
Successes, challenges and learning .....	52
Conclusions.....	56
Recommendations .....	60

### Photo credits

Front Cover: *Where Do We Stand*, Northern Stage Company. Photo by Pamela Raith.  
 p6. *Where Do We Stand*, Northern Stage Company. Photo by Pamela Raith.  
 p10. RADA students training. Photo by Helen Murray.  
 p16. *So Here We Are*, Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch. Photo by Mark Sepple.  
 p29. *The Jungle Book*, Derby Theatre. Photo by Robert Day.  
 p38. *Stiletto Beach*, Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch. Photo by Mark Sepple.  
 p44. *Everything Is Possible*, York Theatre Royal. Photo by Anthony Robling.  
 p46. Joe Mott (bursary holder) in *Journey’s End*, RADA. Photo by Helen Murray.  
 p52. *Stiletto Beach* (rehearsed play reading), Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch. Photo by Mark Sepple.  
 p56. *Where Do We Belong*, Northern Stage Company. Photo by Pamela Raith.

## Executive Summary

The Clothworkers' Foundation (TCF) aims to make “game-changing” interventions by providing opportunities for people who experience disadvantage. It set up the Dramatic Arts Initiative with the intention to address some of the issues challenging the success of the UK theatre industry. The Initiative rose out of a conviction that young individuals are empowered through the arts and that those who are talented can benefit from inspirational teachers and life enhancing experiences. Thus, it is important to invest in the talent pipeline so that talented young individuals have the best opportunity possible to enter the business.

Disadvantage and lack of opportunity pose the greatest threat to the talent pipeline in important sectors of the UK economy such as the creative and cultural industries, especially through the current marginalisation of creative subjects by the education system which is potentially damaging the career and life opportunities of young people, and threatening the continuing success of one of the UK's most innovative and productive industry sectors.

The Dramatic Arts Initiative ran from 2014 to 2018 across two strands. The Bursary strand supported 25 individuals to study with RADA, LAMDA and the NYT or to further their studies and creative careers through the SOLT Laurence Olivier Awards. The second strand, the Regional Theatre Awards, provided five regional theatres across England with £150,000 each over five years to develop new work, young talent and community relationships, in line with the Foundation's broader purposes.

## Delivering successfully

This evaluation and impact assessment demonstrate how the Dramatic Arts Initiative was successful in meeting the original objectives of The Clothworkers' Foundation. The investment in the Dramatic Arts Initiative was intended to achieve the following.

### *Make a difference*

The Dramatic Arts Initiative has made a difference to the how talent is cultivated and developed (the talent pipeline) by providing new opportunities for a wider range of disadvantaged people. Bursary recipients shared common difficulties resulting from low income or a lack of financial support: the Dramatic Arts Initiative has supported people who are held back in their progress through coming from working class backgrounds, being of different ethnicities or having disabilities. The impact and depth of engagement of supporting individuals throughout their study has made a significant difference to the opportunities for each of the bursary holders, which can be seen in some of the critical successes illustrated by case studies in the report.

The Regional Theatre Awards have enabled greater breadth of engagement in deprived communities, providing opportunities for young, disadvantaged people and people with disabilities to discover theatre-making. These Awards provided support and filled the gap left in careers service and advice for young people leaving statutory education by offering



non-academic routes into the creative industries via training and in some cases employment.

### *Game-changing opportunities for individuals*

In particular, the Bursaries have:

- Enabled 25 participants from diverse or disadvantaged backgrounds to study for qualifications in many aspects of theatre-making in the UK's most prestigious drama schools.
- Provided guaranteed, fair financial support to the bursary holders.
- Helped guarantee financial stability over a five-year period for drama school partner organisations.

### *A catalyst for sustainable development*

The Regional Theatre Awards have:

- Enabled theatres to generate audiences who are new to the experience of live theatre.
- Enabled the creation of new work and productions.
- Allowed regional theatres to reach out into new communities in meaningful and sustainable ways.

### *Effective and efficient*

The process and management of the Dramatic Arts Initiative has been effective for both The Clothworkers' Foundation and the partner organisations. The light-touch and personal engagement and involvement of The Clothworkers' Foundation Panel Members and Trustees has been valued and particularly appreciated by bursary holders and theatres.

In strategic terms, the Dramatic Arts Initiative has made a helpful contribution to some of the key priorities which need to be addressed by the theatre industry and the wider cultural sector in order for it to become a more inclusive and representative sector, and to ensure that talent on- and off-stage is nurtured, regardless of background, income or other barriers.

The Dramatic Arts Initiative is a step in acknowledging the barriers created by disadvantage and recognising the scale of need and size of the social inequality issue affecting the UK now. The Clothworkers' Foundation could consider how the changes that this initiative has sparked can be extended and expanded to create a critical mass and increase impact and reach.

### *Taking it forward*

Based on the success of the Dramatic Arts Initiative to date, we recommend that the Dramatic Arts Initiative is extended for a further five years to build on this progress and sustain the momentum gathered by the partner organisations.

Following from that key recommendation, we also propose that The Clothworkers' Foundation:

- consider increasing the investment made by increasing the number of individual Bursaries available through the partner organisations, as this has had the greatest short to medium-term impact in creating value for individuals and wider benefits for the theatre industry. More emphasis on Bursaries to develop theatre technical skills would help in addressing industry shortages and open up extensive employment opportunities.
- continue to invest in industry bodies and organisations that can develop career and talent pathways countrywide, strengthening the partnership with the NYT in particular, and widening the talent pipeline by opening it up to disadvantaged people – the most significant barrier to progress is a lack of financial support or access to finances for study or training.
- build on the very successful interpersonal contact and support that everyone has benefited from, to create a cohort of advocates, supporters and mentors, most particularly for the benefit of the individuals. Bringing together past and current recipients with the partner organisations would create a greater community that can share organisational learning, disseminate and celebrate outcomes and impacts, support each other, and very importantly provide models and people who have “been before us”.
- review the focus of the Regional Theatre Awards. The Awards did not achieve the same successful strategic impacts or return on investment as the Bursaries. Although this strand led to a breadth of engagement for some communities and audiences, in most cases the sustainability of such initiatives is uncertain. The Clothworkers' Foundation might consider whether the Awards should be reiterated at all. Should the decision be made to continue with a regional theatre strand, it is recommended that the Foundation review the focus, so that its investment is strategically directed to support specific initiatives by regional organisations and theatres that run active, innovative and inclusive programmes in areas of deprivation, rather than being award focused. The Regional Theatre Awards could be more directly linked to existing programmes being rolled out by current partners like NYT or SOLT/UK Theatre, to optimise the speed at which change can be made and avoid duplication.
- make the Awards criteria clearer: to strategically develop creative talent and potential; support projects relevant to communities and people not usually represented on or off-stage; and consolidate existing programmes

that extend reach and broaden engagement, participation and opportunities for theatre-making and careers in the cultural sector.

- facilitate partnerships between participating theatres; as with the Bursaries, there is a valuable opportunity to work with partners to create effective networks that enable theatres to collaborate, learn from each other and develop sustainable partnerships, such as touring work created through the Awards, extending the reach and life of the work.
- monitor progress, tracking longitudinal impacts. A formative evaluation framework should be put in place with any extension or development of the Dramatic Arts Initiative and a suitable budget allocated as part of the core costs. Ongoing evaluation and reflection would enable The Clothworkers' Foundation to understand the successes and impacts as they are emerging, see how the investment is delivering results as the Initiative rolls out, and if necessary adjust or change elements. As well as a dynamic planning and monitoring tool, it would enable the impacts and learning to be brought together and enable an effective dissemination strategy so that the cultural sector benefits.
- invest in the Grants team, so that in periods of intense activity there is flexibility to increase capacity or contract expertise to support the team, particularly with regard to the recommendations around creating a cohort and learning community for the Bursaries and Regional Theatre Awards, and changes in the application process.



## Introduction

*“the Cultural and Creative Industries need to take a united and coherent approach that guarantees equal access for everyone to a rich cultural education and the opportunity to live a creative life. There are barriers and inequalities in Britain today that prevent this from being a universal human right. This is bad for business and bad for society.”*

*Warwick Commission Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth, 2015*

The Clothworkers’ Foundation (TCF) aims to make ‘game-changing’ interventions by providing opportunities for a wider cohort of young people. Disadvantage and lack of opportunity pose the greatest threat to the talent pipeline in important sectors of the UK economy such as the creative and cultural industries, especially through the current marginalisation of creative subjects by the education system which is potentially damaging the career and life opportunities of young people, and threatening the continuing success of one of the UK’s most innovative and productive industry sectors.

## Why the dramatic arts?

Why should the dramatic arts be the focus of The Clothworkers’ Foundation’s investment? The Clothworkers’ Foundation is in a position to respond to circumstances and opportunities in which their contribution can make a significant difference. Clothworkers’ Members have connections with the theatre industry and were aware of the difficulties faced by disadvantaged people in trying to enter this industry. The Foundation felt that it is important that young individuals are empowered through the arts and those who are talented can benefit from inspirational teachers and life-enhancing experiences. Investing in the talent pipeline creates a significant opportunity for talented young individuals to enter the theatre business.

The Clothworkers’ Foundation’s decision to focus on the theatre industry brought together the best of the lived-experience and the intentions and aspirations of those involved in the Foundation. The dramatic arts represent a worthwhile focus because of the wider reach of the skills and disciplines they involve: the wide-ranging skills in the dramatic arts drive the media and culture that surrounds us in the UK: TV production; reality shows; dramas and documentaries; theatre, musical theatre, digital media, advertising, gaming – all require skills of communication, creating, acting and increasingly complex and sophisticated technical support and management.

However, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds face difficulties in funding study for qualifications that lead to employability in these creative and cultural industries. The impact on the industry is to limit the talent pool by limiting the diversity of the workforce and by not making the most of the national talent pool, onstage and offstage. The

Clothworkers' Foundation's annual report reveals an extensive record of the impacts of its interventions on individuals who experience disadvantage in a range of ways: the Bursaries and Awards funded through its Dramatic Arts Initiative have proved a logical extension of this approach to investment.

## Goals of the Dramatic Arts Initiative

The Clothworkers' Foundation set up the Dramatic Arts Initiative (pro-active grants, by invitation only) in 2014, with an allocation of £1.25m over five years. The Foundation designed this initiative across two strands:

- Support for talented individuals from low-income backgrounds via full bursaries that enable them to study at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) or the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA); shorter bursaries for young performers and writers at the National Youth Theatre; and a Clothworkers' Laurence Olivier Bursary through the Society of London Theatre (SOLT).
- Support for regional producing theatres in England via a one-off grant for two-year projects, the annual, competitive £150,000 Clothworkers' Theatre Award, hosted and supported by SOLT/UK Theatre.

## Key questions for this evaluation

When writing this report our thinking has been coloured by the question: how can The Clothworkers' Foundation funding be directed to achieve the greatest good and significant long-term impact and value for the beneficiaries?

The Clothworkers' Foundation commissioned this evaluation to investigate these core questions when considering the effectiveness of the Dramatic Arts Initiative:

- Did the investment show sufficient return in benefits for the beneficiaries and the wider sector?
- What have been the key impacts and what are the implications for future Clothworkers' Foundation investments?
- What are the critical success factors in creating and distributing awards? What can be learned from the different models of the two strands in this Initiative? Did different funding models generate different results to those anticipated, and in what ways?
- How can the Clothworkers' Foundation use and apply this knowledge to support its overall vision and purpose? Has this evidenced the need for targeted, artform-specific actions, or does it indicate that the Foundation could take a broader approach?
- What might alternative approaches to overcoming disadvantage look like?

- What is the value of The Clothworkers' Foundation's role in creating opportunities, as an agent of change?
- Has the Foundation's profile increased within the cultural sector as an enabler through collaborative approaches and cross-sectoral partnerships?

## Methodology

Evidence underpinning the findings in this report was drawn from these sources:

### 1. Rapid Evidence Review (RER)

We sought to place the Dramatic Arts Initiative in a wider context through the Rapid Review and Snapshot Critique which allowed us to scope the various forms of evidence about the issues impacting on regional theatres and the theatre sector in general, and to review the issues and barriers facing young people from disadvantaged backgrounds that preclude access to opportunities to develop their talent and progress their careers. (the Rapid Review is included in the Supplementary Materials appendix).

### 2. Survey

We gathered data via an online survey to Dramatic Arts Initiative Bursary holders from across the span of the initiative and received responses from 15 individuals, facilitated by the host organisations. This sample is, by its nature, both small and self-selecting: individual respondents were not compelled to respond and although NYT reported regularly and in depth on progress and achievements, there was no formal evaluation structure in place whilst the Dramatic Arts Initiative was running.

### 3. Interviews

Interviews were undertaken with:

- Clothworkers' Foundation Theatre Award Panel Members
- Partner organisations (RADA, LAMDA, NYT, SOLT/UK Theatre)
- The five regional theatres that received Dramatic Arts Initiative Awards
- Four regional theatres that applied for funding but were unsuccessful in gaining an Award
- Dramatic Arts Initiative Bursary Holders: these interviews formed the basis of case studies for the evaluation.

We also held in-depth interviews with RADA, LAMDA, SOLT and the NYT, exploring how the Clothworkers' support had enabled these organisations to extend their reach, to

increase the diversity of their students (beyond ethnicity, to include other barriers such as low income, coming from outside London, having disabilities) and what it means for the future talent pipelines – and thus to promote a wider representation of our society in the dramatic arts. We also discussed the benefits of the five-year funding both for individual students and in terms of the organisation’s own capacity to support individuals of talent who are in need, including increasing diversity, learning about inclusive practices and thinking, and how students can best be supported. Finally, we reflected upon the effectiveness of the Dramatic Arts Initiative in terms of how the scheme had worked; the impacts of partnerships and how this initiative supports the wider issue of ensuring the talent pipeline is maintained and broadened out.

The data gathered and provided has enabled us to determine the extent to which the Dramatic Arts Initiative can be considered to have been a success, based on the aims and objectives of the Initiative, and to provide recommendations on how its future shape might be changed or improved if appropriate, in the event that it is extended.



## The UK Theatre Industry: context for the Dramatic Arts Initiative

The theatre industry is a complex chain of publicly funded, independent, commercial, and not-for-profit organisations. It is dependent on a range and supply of skills, talent, entrepreneurship and creativity. Theatre makes a key contribution to the cultural and creative industries. However, as the Arts Council analysis of the state of the theatre notes, “it is perhaps inevitable that elements of this structural fabric can come under stress in different ways at different times, potentially damaging the sector as a whole.”<sup>1</sup>

This brief overview is based on our review of recent relevant reports. It highlights the key issues that are facing the theatre industry, sets the context in which the Dramatic Arts Initiative took place, and reiterates the rationale for such an initiative. Further detail is contained in the supporting documentation.

Relating this to The Clothworkers’ Dramatic Arts Initiative, launched in 2014, the two investment interventions (individual bursaries and support for regional theatres) can be seen to have contributed to attempts to counter some of the key challenges facing the theatre industry, as outlined below.

However, the need to keep making progress toward strategic change in the theatre industry remains.

### *Diversity in the theatre industry workforce is limited*

The theatre industry is becoming increasingly concerned at the lack of diversity in its workforce. In the UK, 87% of people are white, and 13% belong to a BAME group. Arts Council England reports<sup>2</sup> that in London, where 41% of the population is BAME, some theatres had a BAME workforce as low as 5%. Research for UK trade bodies last year revealed that 93% of people working in theatre were white. “*When we walk into a theatre, not just on the stage, but when you walk into the administrative offices or backstage and you don’t see anyone who looks like you, you think that this is not for you. It is as simple as that.*” Kwame Kwei-Armah, Artistic Director, the Young Vic.<sup>3</sup>

Other leading influencers in theatre such as Andrew Lloyd Webber and Adrian Lester also highlight that the industry needs to diversify. Lester comments: “*We are the mirror that*

---

<sup>1</sup><https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/downloadfile/Analysis%20of%20Theatre%20in%20England%20report%202018.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> & <sup>5</sup> Arts Council England 2018. Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case.

[https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Diversity\\_report\\_1718\\_hi-resV3.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Diversity_report_1718_hi-resV3.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2018/nov/27/uk-theatres-back-plan-improve-diversity-among-offstage-staff>



*reflects our country to itself ... if our industry doesn't change and change soon, we run the risk of becoming obsolete."*

In recognition of the industry's need to widen its workforce to become more reflective of society, SOLT and UK Theatre launched Stage Sight, a collaborative network to help create a diverse off-stage theatre workforce, to include people from BAME and working class backgrounds, and disabled and D/deaf people.

### *Inclusivity is limited; theatre risks being a "closed shop"<sup>4</sup>*

Significant data demonstrate that the sector is dominated by well-educated people of white ethnicity from middle-class backgrounds. Despite young people aged 16-19 making up over 3% of the population, only 2% of this group work in the arts. A study by O'Brien et al 2018<sup>5</sup> confirms that the arts and cultural workforce is atypical and unrepresentative of the wider population: it is predominantly affluent and middle class in its makeup and values. This presents a significant barrier to entry to this industry to working class people, particularly from BAME and lower-income backgrounds. There has been little progress in increased social mobility in the arts workforce over the last forty years: a recent report from Arts Council England found that the arts have made limited progress in diversifying their workforces, despite significant encouragement.

### *Resistance to change in the industry*

SOLT's report<sup>6</sup> on the theatre workforce presents a depressing picture of the theatre sector, revealing it as complacent, exclusionary and resistant to change. Findings include: shortages in technical and craft skills; outdated and inadequate recruitment and management practices; theatre attracts "theatre-types": a closed shop running on informal networks and patronage; wealth is needed to gain entry into the sector and to sustain a career due to low wages and poor workplace conditions; a culture of working in theatre out of love creates an expectation of long hours and antisocial working practices; theatre operates a hierarchy of prestige between "creative talent" and everyone else; feelings of being undervalued are widespread.

### *Inequalities of class*

Arts Council of England's Analysis of Theatre in England (BOP/Devlin2016)<sup>7</sup> asserts that "there is very little data on the social class of people working in the theatre in England. However, the data that exists shows the difficulties that those from *non-middle-class backgrounds* face in accessing jobs in the sector, particularly acting". Friedman S, O'Brien

---

<sup>4</sup> CC Skills CEO Simon Dancey, <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/article/myth-meritocracy>

<sup>5</sup> <http://createlondon.org/event/panic-paper/>

<sup>6</sup> Workforce Review of the UK Offstage Theatre and Performing Arts Sector Final Report June 2017 (Nordicity and Alistair Smith for SOLT)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Analysis%20of%20Theatre%20in%20England%20-%20Final%20Report.pdf>

D & Laurison, D. 2016<sup>8</sup> state that the key disadvantage facing working class people seeking to enter the acting profession, discrimination based on social class – the “*Class Ceiling*”- has been overlooked in favour of other issues of inequality experienced by women and ethnic minorities, limiting opportunity to majority groups comprising British society.

### *Ideas of meritocracy*

Despite evidence showing that the arts workforce is defined by social class and educational background, the sector appears to hold a strong belief that talent, ambition and hard work will win through, regardless of other social factors of age, ethnicity, financial means and social connections. O’Brien observes that the people in the upper echelons – those in the highest-paid positions and who influence policy – posit a meritocratic equality and are least open to the possibility that social factors (such as ethnicity, gender or social class) might constrain equality of opportunity in the arts for large sections of the population. The study questions that the arts are open and accessible: it is more the case that the arts sector is socially homogeneous and sceptical about social exclusion.

### *Social mobility and talent pipeline – a deficit in equality of opportunity*

Lack of social diversity in the arts reflects a more widespread decline in levels of social mobility in UK society. Social mobility involves the availability of equal opportunities for individuals to achieve their potential in terms of education, income and occupation. The “millennials” are the first post-war generation to have lower wages than their parents. The Boston study (2017) argues that access to equal opportunity is determined by the availability of advantageous networks, information about opportunities, and low levels of discrimination e.g. based on class and family wealth.

The situation is not all bleak: there is a growing public awareness of society’s inbuilt inequalities. An IPSOS Mori survey (2017) found that more people believed that opportunities for advancement in Britain are unequally distributed: young people and those from lower social grades were pessimistic about positive social mobility. Educational mobility has declined in recent years: a quarter of adults lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, consigning them to low-skilled, low wage labour, whilst people who went to private school earned 41% more than people from state schools (Machin & Elliott 2018). Oakley and O’Brien (2016) summarised the themes that are enablers and barriers to talent development and creative career progression or lack of progression in England: financial, infrastructure and support networks, class, gender, disability, ethnicity, freedom of movement and support for mid-career as well as emerging artists.

---

<sup>8</sup> Friedman S, O’Brien D & Laurison, D. 2016. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0038038516629917>

*Lack of understanding by schools, career advisors and colleges on career opportunities in the theatre industry is resulting in a skills shortage*

The House of Lords has launched an inquiry into the gap between the skills demanded by the theatre industry and those supplied by education. The Skills for the Theatre Industry inquiry highlighted that the creative industries contribute £87.4 billion to the UK economy, according to 2015 figures, but that there is “a widening gap between the skills demanded by the sector and those supplied by education and training providers.” The Inquiry notes concerns that a career in theatre has been limited to those who can afford it, leading to a decrease in diversity within the sector.<sup>9</sup> The Creative Industries Federation also voiced concerns about the lack of understanding of the many roles available in the theatre industry and that careers advice is often inadequate and ill-informed in outlining the options available to young people or understanding the possibilities opened up across the industry.<sup>10</sup>

---

9 <https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/2017/house-lords-inquiry-asks-theatre-failed-education/>

10 Louise Jury, Director of Communications and Strategy for the Creative Industries Federation: <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/node/201150>

## The Clothworkers' Foundation Bursaries

The Foundation's decision to award Bursaries for young people to study theatre was based on recognition of the issues cited in our Review that are faced by young people in gaining entry to drama schools.

This decision also reflects an ongoing concern over socio-economic inequalities in that students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are still almost two and a half times less likely to enter Higher Education than those from more advantaged backgrounds.<sup>11</sup> Our evaluation considers the factors that influenced their life experiences and what drove their desire to go to drama school. In line with the experience of many young people facing disadvantage<sup>12</sup> their circumstances were complex and associated with the negative effects of social, cultural and economic disadvantage and personal life-situations. Students from areas that are socio-economically deprived and where there are fewer opportunities for access to cultural experiences, with poor performing schools, and from families with limited experience face many challenges, *“students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to apply and be admitted to elite/top universities compared to more affluent students, and in particular those from grammar schools/independent schools.”*<sup>13</sup>

These investigations provide insight into the barriers faced by bursary holders and the influence of gaining the bursary on their career trajectories.

## Review of bursary schemes and initiatives

The Clothworkers' Foundation was inspired to develop the proactive grants programme for the Dramatic Arts to address the issue of social inequality and its negative impact on young people from lower incomes as a barrier to accessing further and higher education, specifically in the dramatic arts, and the longer-term impact of this situation on the theatre industry as a whole. This issue was raised in 2013, and seems to be escalating, according to ongoing media reports (both mainstream and trade, such as *The Stage* or *Arts Professional*). This is attributed to a “perfect storm” that includes the downgrading of arts subjects in state education, the inadequate and ill-informed careers advice, the ongoing issues of tuition fees and restrictions linked to debts incurred through Student Loan, combined with wider social impacts resulting from more general austerity measures

---

<sup>11</sup> University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), [2015](#).

<sup>12</sup> Experience of disadvantage: The influence of identity on engagement in working class students' educational trajectories to an elite university: Thiele, Pope, Singleton, et al, Wiley 2016

<sup>13</sup> As above 2

– the figures show that it is those on the lowest incomes that have experienced the most cuts and difficulties.<sup>14</sup>



Most bursaries in arts and culture that are distributed tend to be awarded to organisations or registered charities rather than to individuals. In the instances where there are awards to individuals these tend to be to enable established practitioners to make new work that develops their practice. Examples include Leverhulme Arts Scholarships<sup>15</sup>, ArtsAdmin’s Artists’ Bursary Scheme<sup>16</sup> and the National Youth Arts Trust<sup>17</sup> which focus on the individual. However, the sums are relatively small and often restricted to those in the industry. Schemes such as Wellcome Trust Arts Awards<sup>18</sup> or ACE<sup>19</sup> are directed toward established organisations and individuals. There are, of course, any number of individual charitable foundations and trusts which make small grants, such as the Elephant Trust<sup>20</sup> or the Oppenheim-John Downes Memorial Trust<sup>21</sup>, but they may have restrictions on age, experience and artform.

There is also the significant challenge of tracking down eligible grants and application

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/24/world/europe/britain-austerity-may-budget.html> and [https://www.independent.co.uk/news/long\\_reads/britain-austerity-changing-everything-prescot-food-banks-universal-credit-a8373851.html](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/britain-austerity-changing-everything-prescot-food-banks-universal-credit-a8373851.html) and [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Poverty/EOM\\_GB\\_16Nov2018.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Poverty/EOM_GB_16Nov2018.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Awarded to specialist arts institutions or registered charities to provide training opportunities across the fine and performing arts: music, drama, dance, film, fine art. Grants run for 3 years for training at any level, from schoolchildren, to undergraduates and postgraduates. Individual scholars or students may not apply directly to the Trust.

<sup>16</sup> Eight awards to UK-based artists working in live art and contemporary performance who have been making work for up to ten years. At least three offered to artists from culturally diverse backgrounds (BAME). The bursary includes: an award of £3,500; meetings with ArtsAdmin’s Artist Development team; £300 for mentoring.

<sup>17</sup> Bursaries in music, dance, drama: up to £1,000 each, to talented young people aged 12-25 who cannot afford to access opportunities in the arts. A bursary pays for a year’s classes, and tuition fees at drama school.

<sup>18</sup> Up to £40,000 for small-to-medium sized projects and above £40,000 for large projects. Applicants must live and work in the UK and are usually affiliated to third-party organisations (e.g. galleries).

<sup>19</sup> Developing Your Creative Practice: awards to individuals of £2,000 to £10,000 to take a period of time to focus on their own creative development.

<sup>20</sup> £2,000 to £5,000 grants to UK artists for new, innovative visual projects.

<sup>21</sup> Grants from £250 – £1,000 for British practitioners over the age of 30 who are experiencing financial difficulties in the pursuit of their careers.

processes – this is a real barrier for young people who have the disadvantage of not knowing about these schemes or having the resources or support structures to help them apply.

Therefore, it is the long-term commitment by The Clothworkers' Foundation to funding the main drama school and industry partners at a sufficient level to give meaningful levels of support to young, disadvantaged young people who wish to follow careers in the dramatic arts that has made a significant difference to the individuals the Bursaries have supported at the beginning of their studies and careers.

## Impacts on individuals

The Clothworkers' Foundation selected four partner organisations, representing the highest quality and rigorous training, education and workforce development opportunities: RADA, LAMDA, NYT and SOLT. Bringing SOLT, the representative organisation for UK theatres, into the scheme enabled The Clothworkers' Foundation to optimize the strategic and practical benefits of partnering at the very highest and most influential levels, utilising a level of knowledge, experience and expertise that would have been impossible otherwise. SOLT was involved in both the Bursary scheme, through the prestigious Laurence Olivier Awards, and with the Regional Theatre Awards, with an experienced panel advising The Clothworkers' Foundation. Students received living costs, and support towards tuition fees, participation in the rep company, or taking further specialist studies, depending on both their level of need, and the type of bursary offered by each organisation. Support was also provided over the entire study time, with the result that some individuals have had long-term financial support, creating a “space of ease” in which to focus on their learning, rather than having to take part-time work to fund their studies.

The bursaries enabled access to different levels of education and type of learning opportunity: these included full BA or first-degree studies in Acting or Technical Theatre; bursaries for repertory and young writers, to the nationally recognised and prestigious Laurence Olivier Bursaries. These routes reflect the many ways of entering and developing a thriving dramatic career, whether acting, writing or in technical management. Accordingly, the partner organisations received different amounts of support, ranging from £180,000 to £37,500 (£447,500 in total over 5 years), reflecting the nature of the bursary and length of study required.

The core question for The Clothworkers' Foundation is: Did the investment show sufficient return in benefits for the beneficiaries and wider sector?

Our investigation also sought to assess the extent to which the initiative was successful in meeting The Foundation's goals, whether the investment met their expectations, what had been most effective, what most challenging, in order to draw out the key conclusions and thus formulate realistic, sustainable recommendations for The Foundation to consider.

## Criteria for success for individual bursary holders

After some discussion about what might be considered as success for the individuals and what constitutes success - artistic success, financial security, credentials from their host institution, etc. - we agreed that the key criterion by which to measure the success of the DAI for individuals is:

*A life-changing opportunity, a game-changer as artists and future talents*

By which we mean:

- Being able to study without financial worries
- Completing their studies or bursary
- Obtaining a (good/recognised) agent subsequent to graduation
- Being in work as much as they desire at a high level (i.e. profile, production, etc)
- Being able to explore the work they are interested in developing
- Opportunity to explore different facets of their potential talent, for example, moving from acting to writing
- Opportunity to fulfil a long-term and long-held ambition or goal.

We also considered other impacts or benefits for bursary holders:

- Improved self-confidence and feeling of esteem – being selected for a bursary is a validation of talent
- Better able to study and take up further opportunities (such as work experience) because the financial support removes fears about living costs and taking on student debt
- Removing worry and financial anxiety from their family
- Being the first person in their family to enter higher education/a high profile drama school
- Having barriers removed to enable them to study a course they want to, e.g. a person with disabilities has completed the Theatre Technical course: thus, this alerts others in similar situations to life-changing opportunities

Finally, we have considered what these individuals who benefited from Bursaries might contribute to the sector more broadly. These include increased diversity in students entering the talent pipeline; greater representation of disadvantaged people, both on- and off-stage or in production; creating positive role models for others in similar circumstances; and providing formal and informal mentoring to those who come after them. We have followed their progress through public searches and the graduate details on RADA, LAMDA and NYT websites and social media.

## Findings: individual bursary holders

Our Rapid Review identified that there has been very little assessment or evaluation (ongoing or retrospective) of creative bursary schemes such as this, and so this evaluation adds to the sectoral knowledge and learning. The Jerwood Foundation has undertaken an in-depth investigation of the impacts on individuals of the Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries 2017-19, as well as producing a toolkit for organisations that wish to explore ways to diversify and become more inclusive.<sup>22</sup>

It is also clear from the Rapid Review that the initial motivation behind the Dramatic Arts Initiative (the difficulty of young people from working class or low-income backgrounds in accessing study) remains as powerful an influence in 2019 as in 2013; indeed, some of the analysis suggests that the problem is further embedded as inequality becomes more deeply entrenched in society in general. The issue of how social inequality and existing barriers affect the representativeness of our dramatic arts and culture appears regularly in both mainstream media and the trade press<sup>23</sup>. However, the Panic! Report<sup>24</sup> makes clear that one of the cultural sector's problems is a firm belief in meritocracy, so it is important that initiatives which seek to address the problems, through toolkits and advice for employers and funders, are disseminated widely.

Our findings also suggest that there is an opportunity for The Clothworkers' Foundation to co-operate further with other funders interested in addressing these issues and perhaps make the investment work even harder by using the strategic knowledge to support further change. We would suggest using the findings from the evaluation to initiate conversations and discussions with key funders, including ACE and leading trusts and foundations, such as The Sutton Trust, Esmée Fairbairn, Gulbenkian and Paul Hamlyn.

---

<sup>22</sup> <https://jerwoodarts.org/projects/weston-jerwood-creative-bursaries-2017-19/toolkit/>

<sup>23</sup> Socio-economic background is referenced in this article from 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019:

<https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/2019/angry-residents-low-pay-soaring-rent-edinburgh-fringe/>

<sup>24</sup> Panic! Social Class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries



The key findings from our analysis of the data collected from individual bursary holders validate the thinking and rationale behind the Clothworkers' Bursaries.

None of the bursary recipients would have been able to pursue their personal educational and career ambitions without the bursary, for a variety of reasons related to money.

**All the bursary holders have been able to achieve or progress towards their educational and career ambitions:** some have enjoyed considerable critical success or have been in constant employment. An example of such a success is Luke Thallon, whose story is illustrated in this case study:

### Luke's story

*The Clothworkers' Foundation SOLT Laurence Oliver Bursary Holder 2016*

Luke Thallon reflected on his experience as a Clothworkers' Foundation bursary holder: "The Guildhall BA Acting course was the one of the best in London, with great connections and perfect location."

The removal of financial barriers enabled Luke to move towards his goals. "It meant I could move into a flat, remove a financial pressure from my parents. I have been able to focus solely on working as an actor in terms of income."

Luke recently won considerable press recognition for his role in the West End run of *Private Lives*.

"Luke Thallon is wonderfully funny as Roland Maule, the aspiring playwright who will not quit, in any sense." *Time Out, June 2019*

"Funniest of all is his [Andrew Scott's] encounter with the playwright from Uckfield, Roland Maule, whom Luke Thallon invests with a lunging intensity." *The Guardian, June 2019*

**Those who have graduated and who were interviewed for this report are all working as much as they wish**, and in the areas in which they wish to progress, notwithstanding the expected challenges identified by respondents, partners and panel members. Those who are still studying feel very well supported in learning and pastoral care by their institution. We received very little response from the bursary holders who had taken technical qualifications (although current students responded well, as in the case study below), but we attribute this to their being in work and busy doing what they studied to do.

## Millie's story

*LAMDA two-year Foundation Degree in Stage Management and Technical Arts*

“The bursary had made it possible for me to take up my place at university. I came very close to having to turn down a place at one of the top universities for my course purely for financial reasons. And now I'm getting to work with some of the top people in the industry and it's giving me an amazing platform from which to enter the industry and become the technician I can be.”

Millie feels that working in a very inaccessible industry as full time wheelchair user presents many challenges. “Particularly considering being a wheelchair user with my level of disability entering such a practical industry was never going to be the easiest things to do and being one of the first to do it, but this course has allowed me to get my foot in the door that I can build on from – and all possible because I got the financial help to take up my place.

“It's very much a ‘who you know’ industry that is hard to get your foot in the door in terms of building those contacts.”

Receiving the bursary made her feel “Relieved and very fortunate. I've finally been able to do something that I've been aiming towards for years that is going to give me tools to get to where I want to go.”

The most important things Millie has learnt are “Lots of technical skills and experience and lots of contacts and connections with the industry.

“It's really lovely how interested The Clothworkers' Foundation are in our progress and how things are going.”

In the overall context of the creative industries, what's also interesting to note is the sudden increase in opportunities through Netflix and Amazon Prime, which are busy casting and auditioning, particularly for BAME actors; this was reflected in our conversations with individuals, and in the Snapshot Critique.

NYT in particular enables students to develop a range of creative skills to enable them to respond to such opportunities:

## Yolanda's story

*NYT Writers' Bursary Holder*

Yolanda Mercy is a National Youth Theatre Playing Up Company alumnus and award-winning writer. Her recent credits include *Quarter Life Crisis* (BBC Radio 1Xtra). She wrote *Summer Fest*, which had a run of 5 performances (10 – 14 July) at The Bunker Theatre, Southwark.

Director Lakesha Arie-Angelo explained the process of creating the show with Yolanda and the current Playing Up Company.

In development workshops, "Yolanda would share extracts of the script and different individuals could bring their own creative spin; this collaborative approach worked really well with Yolanda's initial script and helped shape and define the characters within the story."

Our evaluator attended the show, which explored the dramatic highs and lows of the highlight of the social calendar: Summer Fest. The show featured a cast of 21 performers and was a mix of ensemble action with small group and individual scenes. Everyone had a spotlight part with some solo stories and other tender scenes between two or three performers.

Yolanda Mercy's writing was funny, poignant and engaging, conveying a narrative with perfectly placed contemporary references. Characterisation had been carefully considered and allowed audiences to empathise with some and feel angry at others; we believed in these characters, their strengths and their frailties.

The ensemble scenes showed how closely the group supported each other, visually exciting... at times uninhibited joy and fun and at other times showing a darker side of human behaviour. It was all so well performed by the Playing Up Company.

*"It's allowed me to continue writing. Tortoise was my second play and it has been another stepping-stone in my writing career. I went on to write a short film afterwards which was selected for London Film Festival and is currently being developed into a TV series. It allowed me to write a play with a full Research and Development process which is a huge luxury as this is not always possible due to funding and financial restraints on commissions."*

*"I graduated and got the agent I wanted and I'm now working regularly due to having the time to work as hard as I could."*

*"To have a play produced in a main space at a London theatre is something that I would have had to wait for years for. Plus, to have had to write for such a large cast was a real challenge and a gift. The bursary has made me dream big. It's given me*

*the tools and the self-belief to expand my horizons and increase my career ambition. I feel I can now go into meetings with big theatres and have the confidence to believe I belong.”*

**The financial support also relieved families of the pressure of helping to achieve qualifications:** as all the bursary recipients were from low-income, single parent or working-class backgrounds, the support rippled out to benefit their families, as reflected in this case study:

### Joshua's story

*LAMDA three-year BA Acting 2017-20*

Studying drama at LAMDA on a Clothworker's bursary fulfilled an ambition he'd had since he was 13 years old. "This bursary has changed my life completely. I grew up in Somerset, which is 98% white; I'm mixed race, so you can imagine how that was. Identity is a big issue: white people are not understanding, because I don't have dark skin, Black people are claiming me as black! The bursary opened up my future in a different way than it would have in Somerset.

"Not only has it changed my life, by giving me the chance to develop into a professional actor and artist...but has changed my mum's life as well. She hasn't had to worry about helping me out, which is a big deal. I am a more together and relaxed person because of this bursary, and I see the same in my mum too. It has matured me as a person. I was not aware of how difficult acting was until coming to London. I have achieved professional development in every area of my training; a bigger confidence in going towards my goals, and it has lit a fire in me that burns for the desire to work hard. I am all round a better person and performer because of this bursary.

"The bursary has been really an act of the divine for me. When you graft and struggle through life, sometimes a helping hand brings you out of a hole. It has confirmed to me that I am doing the right things in life and that as long as I stay true and strong to what I want...then eventually easier times will follow.

"A gift this big, and this meaningful – it has changed my life and my career. I am eternally grateful for it. I don't have to work on top of studying, I'm coming from a place of excitement and energy. I've really developed as an actor and artist, I wouldn't have learned as much about my craft if I hadn't been free to devote all my time and energy to studying, without the worry of money. It's the ease it's given to me.

"I've learnt my worth as a modern-day storyteller, and how my ambition and gumption could potentially influence society. Also, the importance of having purpose in your life."

*“It allowed me to take the financial pressure off my spouse who was supporting me through drama school and at the same time was a huge mental vindication when I really needed it. It was an incredible feeling and I still remember the moment I found that I had won.”*

*“It’s very important to understand what it’s like to imagine living without financial constraint, it gave me perspective to understand what I have, even now, my mindset is different. I don’t live from a sense of “lack” anymore. “*

*“I have a daughter and there is no way I could have supported us both and attended school.”*

**The individual bursary holders all come from diverse backgrounds** and brought their lived experiences to the partner organisations, broadening the student population and enabling organisations to break down barriers - for example, enabling students with disabilities to study Technical Theatre. What they all shared was a lack of finance and low-income backgrounds. Respondents identified as being of working class, Black British, Northern, African and having a disability as individuals, and it would seem that through setting low income as a key criterion for a bursary award, The Clothworkers’ Foundation has opened up opportunity across the spectrum of additional barriers to access, such as ethnicity, gender or disability. This case study illustrates how a bursary holder from a diverse background responded to his experience and its impacts on his thinking:

### Samuel’s story

*LAMDA three-year BA Acting 2016-19*

Samuel came to England from Nigeria aged 9, from a working-class background. He couldn’t take out a loan to study drama because of status issues related to his family. “Because of that, other things came into play – loopholes in a system that I couldn’t control and took a lot of counselling to get over the mental challenge. Happy to say that I overcame the situation and happy to share to show people that life doesn’t have to stop because of external factors.”

That was why he needed the Clothworkers’ bursary via LAMDA, his local college. “Without the Clothworkers, I would not be able to achieve my dreams without their financial support, their influence on my development as an artist, the correlation of how much difference they have made. I am so grateful, and I want them to know.”

The bursary changed his life by removing financial barriers and worry, allowing him to focus on the studies he came to LAMDA for. Without it, “I would have gone the usual route: work, auditions everywhere – the bursary let me go the more direct route, which impacts on my ability to get on. It’s given a boost – like rocket fuel. I’ve been auditioning for stuff, Amazon and theatre. Got a good agent, definite marker of success.

“I’ve found difficult that I didn’t have anyone from a similar background to me; working class; the place I’ve come from, understanding my experience. The crux is more of a mental and emotional issue, feeling like you can’t fit into these worlds. All our teachers were middle-class white, so for those students they had an intrinsic connection. The show I did with a Black Director, dancer, made a big difference. It transformed the experience for me, a deeper level of confidence and comfort: I saw that it was all right for me to speak about certain things that I couldn’t otherwise. I’ve been advocating for greater representation, to reflect our society as it is, there has been progress, but there are things that could make it better. As a young artist and aspiring artist, I feel that in every generation, something happens and we need to move with the zeitgeist, fundamentally, I am the future of the arts, learning what worked from previous generations and taking it forward. My training gave me a space to work mind, body and soul on this, a part of my being – the space to discover myself as an artist.

“I was allocated a mentor by LAMDA, but not had much connection or communication. Went back to college, to speak to younger kids, provide a trajectory. Would like to have a connection with someone further up.”

*“I’m working class and northern and I feel that is a massive struggle in the industry.”*

*“I’m the first person in my family to have a degree and I have found work relating to my degree.”*

## Barriers and constraints

There were few challenges identified by the bursary holders in terms of their study – the experience of their time at NYT, LAMDA, RADA or receiving a SOLT award had been only positive. Several respondents suggested ways in which the sense of “fellowship” could be nourished, and more formal mentoring could be developed among the cohort across the years. Those still studying or recently graduated were particularly emphatic about how they would like opportunities to personally engage with and report on their progress with representatives of The Clothworkers’ Foundation: the personal involvement of key individuals and the interest shown by panel members was very much valued. Individuals felt a personal connection with The Clothworkers’ Foundation; many of the survey replies indicated that they would have welcomed more contact, more opportunities to meet and talk about what the bursary had enabled them to do.

*“I would have personally loved to meet my sponsors at the end of every term. Even if it is me coming to them or them coming to me...I feel like the people who have changed my life need to hear me and see me because I am a bit of an old soul and sending my thought in a letter or email is not the same as having a conversation.”*

Overall, the barriers identified by respondents were mainly about larger, societal issues. They referred to the precarity of the theatre business; the need for constant improvement; development and being resourceful were a given for respondents.

*“You can never control who gives you a job, that means it’s very tricky to ‘do what you want to do’...it’s the irregularity of acting work”*

*“Unpredictable financials will always be something to deal with.”*

*“I would be lying if I said I wasn’t fearful about making money after I leave RADA; but I’m a talented actor, I have a world-class training from the no. 1 drama school, and I believe the work will come and I’ll make it work when it doesn’t.”*

What continues to constrain them are factors linked to coming from a working-class background; having a disability, or being of colour, even being female in certain sub-sectors. Individuals were often aware that they were the first in their families or groups to encounter these institutions and felt they “represented” their group in those settings, too. We asked individuals to identify barriers that remained or continued to hold them back: an example is shown in this case study from a young woman of colour:

### Precious’ story

*The Clothworkers’ Foundation SOLT Laurence Oliver Bursary Holder 2017*

“The Clothworker’s Foundation bursary gave me the freedom to focus solely on my training without the burden of financial woes. It meant a lot to me because it also instilled a sense of confidence and encouragement that I have chosen the right career path and people see my potential.

“For the first two years of my training I relied on working long shifts during the summer holidays to balance paying rent as well as also going to the theatre. So, it was amazing when I received the bursary in my final year because I no longer had to struggle anymore. It was as if a weight had been lifted and I could now properly put my all into the last year of my training.

“The bursary enabled me to focus on my craft and hone my skills as well as have more time to read plays and see a lot of theatre which is mainly what my career revolves around.

“This bursary has influenced my career ambition positively; it has created a smooth transition for me from being a student to graduating and gave me a boost financially.

“I believe what holds me back from doing what I want to do is the lack of opportunities for people like me. I think that the industry is slowly but surely evolving, and it is becoming more accessible to minorities, but I still do believe that it has a very long way to go.

“The best thing about receiving the bursary has been all the support from the

foundation afterwards. Being invited to the dinners to meet the generous men and women who invested in me is truly lovely and instils me with confidence.

“The most important thing I have learnt through doing the course is that I love my identity. I think it is very common that people go to drama schools and lose themselves and forget who they are but nothing has ever come easy to me so I went into drama school in a secure state of mind and left just the same if not more in love with where I am from.”

*“It would be helpful to be paired with someone who just understands my experience because they have had it, too, recently enough to remember what it’s like to be the only one in a group who is different.”*

*“Money, definitely, and class.”*

*“I am still having to work full time and long shifts for money, this means I don’t have adequate time to prep for auditions when they come up. As a working-class artist, I think we have to work double hard. As I haven’t come from a background where people I know are in the arts, I don’t have the connections that some people do. I have to work all the time, also I don’t have the money to further my craft to continue to go to acting classes as this requires time and money”*

*I have not had any major setbacks as of yet. However, I feel that, once the time comes, it might be difficult to fund the first couple of projects. Therefore, networking will play an important part of everything I’ll do. I also hope that the general inequity of men and women will not hinder me as the industry is still dominated by men, especially across directing and content creation.*

## Impacts of the programme on partner organisations

The Clothworkers’ Foundation invited the UK’s leading drama academies to act as partners in the delivery of the Bursaries: RADA, LAMDA, SOLT/UK Theatres, and National Youth Theatre (NYT) from 2015-19, making grants available as follows:

- RADA: 6 award holders
- LAMDA: 5 award holders
- NYT: 11 award holders
- SOLT/UK Theatres – Laurence Olivier Bursary (one per year since 2014): 5 award holders



The Clothworkers' Foundation chose to work with these four partner organisations because their ethos aligns with the Foundation's core objective to address disadvantage and to make a difference. All are committed to widening access and participation to students who experience disadvantage; all are based in London and have strong relationships with leading players in the theatre industry. All recognise that BAME and people on low incomes or with disabilities need to be more visible in their organisations so that they are better able to reflect society. All four partners have a strong track record for high levels of employment for their graduates.

We agreed that the key criteria for success from the partner organisations' point of view were:

- enabling students in need, with talent, to pursue their studies without financial worry.
- enabling the partner organisations to diversify their student intake, with a broad definition of being disadvantaged.
- becoming more inclusive in their student intake and practices by being able to remove financial barriers to more people from low-income or working-class backgrounds, ethnicities or people with disabilities.

## Findings

- Partner organisations have been able to open their programmes to more students in need and have reported that their student bodies are more diverse as a result: from working class backgrounds, different parts of the country and from different ethnicities.
- The partner organisations have been able to offer security throughout individuals' courses and have been able to build strategically upon the security and stability offered by a five-year investment and partnership.
- Partner organisations have learned about the needs and ways to support a more diverse range of students, including the pastoral support and ways to ensure that potential students in need are identified at an early stage.
- Partner organisations are reporting a shift in terms of who leads departments and faculties, who teaches courses, etc., as sustained efforts to broaden representation are bearing results and individuals progress in their careers.

### *Inclusivity through diversity*

The Clothworkers' Foundation's partners have all embraced the opportunity to increase diversity, broaden participation and access, and most importantly, nurture talent, regardless of background, income or location. This has been achieved in different ways, but all with the same purpose. From our conversations with individuals, it is clear that this

aim has been achieved, with much learning, and could generate long-term, long-lasting positive impacts if the investment were to be continued and expanded.

*'Why is it important to support a dream? The dramatic arts reflect society and contributes to our emotional intelligence.'* LAMDA



LAMDA and RADA are both relatively small schools (compared with, say, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama ), and have a strong focus on providing financial support to students, to ensure that talent is not held back by income and circumstances. LAMDA currently offers support to 20% of students and is aiming to recruit 1 in 3 students from low-income or disadvantaged backgrounds, whilst RADA can support nearly 50% of its student body of 200 through scholarships. LAMDA, in particular, takes a broad view of how it can be more inclusive, having opened up its technical courses to people with disabilities, realising that there are many technical skills and roles that can be undertaken by people with disabilities, in recognition that representation must not be limited to who is seen onstage, but should extend across all the different aspect of production. They also acknowledged that having more diverse students helps them to see the need and way to remove barriers, by having those students in LAMDA and learning how to meet their needs and enable them to participate fully in their studies and broader student life.

*"if you are passionate about theatre, you will make it through, but will need training, education and access to learning. Bursaries provide proper training for professional actors – to be consistent: understand how to use their bodies, manage themselves, sustain 7 performances a week for 2 months. They have technique; they are*

*industry-ready, which means people can hire these graduates and know they will deliver.”*

The NYT operates to a different model but shares the same vision of opening up the access and opportunities for young people with talent from a wider range of backgrounds and locations, by exposing young people to all aspects of theatre-making. Its programme allows performers to become writers or stage technicians: students can develop skills to play to their strengths or find new strengths they didn't know they had. The NYT nurtures and supports young people before they become more aware of the options available in FE or HE, supplementing the loss of knowledge in theatre and technical subjects caused by the EBacc by giving young people the opportunity to find out more.

The financial barriers are also a major consideration for the NYT, raising the question of how it can widen participation despite this challenge. Young people who want to study drama in London face the major cost of relocating, which is almost impossible without financial support (and this was reflected by individual responses to our investigations). Taking loans is not an option for many young people and as NYT comments:

*“more importantly we should not be promoting debt. The £5K bursary is life changing and helps to make a shift in their lives. It affects what they write about and their experiences. They are the kinds of people who are under-represented in the industry. Many young people from working class backgrounds don't get any exposure to possibilities. A key issue is the closure of local theatres and the demise of many outreach programmes, so theatre is simply not part of their culture.”*

NYT is also approaching diversity and representation through the Playing Up Programme<sup>25</sup>, a unique opportunity to work with a group of young people facing particular barriers, alongside a writer who collaborates to produce a piece that reflects their issues and concerns. It is a one-off opportunity that does not often happen in theatre – for this sustained length of time, and with high production values – allowing participants to develop a wide range of theatre skills and working to widen the talent pipeline.

*“The Bursaries are an opportunity to nudge the industry forward in increasing access and inclusion, but the industry needs to find new ways to march forward so it can continue to be a change-maker and increase the ripples made by the bursaries.”*

---

<sup>25</sup> An OCN Level 3 accredited nine-month drama training programme, offering young people aged 19-24 not in Education, Employment or Training the opportunity to gain a Higher Education Diploma in Theatre Arts, the equivalent of 2 “A” Levels.

SOLT set up the Laurence Olivier Bursaries in 1987 to provide financial support to exceptional students entering their final year of drama school and facing financial difficulties which might impede their studies, and there is a tight focus on who will derive maximum benefit. The partnership with The Clothworkers' Foundation has funded the annual Laurence Olivier Bursary for five years. The Bursaries are very prestigious; winners are judged by their peers and the best in the field and linking the bursaries to the Olivier awards adds resonance across the theatre industry. SOLT contacts drama schools to ensure they put forward their most talented students. The bursaries have been broadened out to include production and backstage skills, responding to the identified need to develop the theatre workforce of the future and initiatives to diversify that workforce.

*“The theatre industry needs to find new entry points and learning processes for young people to gain experience so we can secure the next generation of actors and theatre-makers.”*

### *Security through financial stability*

All the partner organisations agreed that the stability provided by five-year funding had been key to the difference they had been able to make in making progress in diversity and inclusion. The security afforded LAMDA, RADA and the NYT has rippled out to the individuals they have supported and offered the organisations a fundraising foundation to build on.

*“It is unique and amazing to be able to say, yes, we can help you, to individual students, up to £12,000 a year. It has been brilliant to have five years of guaranteed funding, so we know we could support a number of students. Fantastic to have the luxury of time from a fund-raising point of view. It is very unusual to have five years of scholarship support.”*

The legacy will be at a personal, organisational and sectoral level, as students continue to be more diverse and representative of society, enter the industry and start to create and contribute to theatre, film, TV, etc. both on and off-stage. The focus on the individual and the opportunity for individuals has been very important for the success of these bursaries. NYT, for example, has appreciated feeling part of a bigger group, with LAMDA, RADA and the regional theatres. SOLT has been able to consolidate on the long-term success of the Awards by extending them to include recognition of off-stage capability and talent, which supports the other initiatives and efforts they are making to innovate and diversify in the theatre sector.

*“The bursaries and support are good for RADA because it's important for the continuation of creativity, having people of different backgrounds making the work. It sounds simplistic but it's essential.”*

*“When Clothworkers' said we'd like to fund you it was an extraordinary experience for us because this offer was so in line with our objectives for social inclusion and young people.”*

SOLT regularly comes up against the issue of how money restricts options for young actors, and the impact on the talent pipeline, with a dearth of opportunities open to young people to enter the theatre industry. Despite the theatre industry's substantial contribution to the UK economy, the reduction in arts services and arts funding is a real cause for concern and unease over the state of the theatre industry, especially in the regions: SOLT has extensively and persistently lobbied for better funding but "*the doors are closed with this government*" – making the provision of bursaries necessary and essential to the health of the industry. SOLT and UK Theatre find that access to drama schools is limited due to the fees and living costs related to studying, which rule out many young people from entering the industry, as illustrated in this case study:

## Leonard's Story

*RADA three-year BA Acting 2017-20*

Leonard is from a very modest financial background and previously studied English for four years at Trinity College Dublin on a government grant whilst working to make ends meet. Money has always been a big source of anxiety in his life so when he was accepted at RADA his first thought was "How on earth am I going to fund this?". At first he thought he may need to turn his place down due to lack of funding – so the Clothworkers' bursary has played a crucial role in making his dream a reality. Leonard explains, "I've learned so much more about myself as an actor and an individual during my time at RADA and can confidently state that it's the best thing I've done with my life so far. It's made me a more compassionate and empathetic person, taught me to recognise and harness all that is unique and brilliant in me, and introduced me to ideas and relationships that will stay with me all my life."

Receiving the support for a place at RADA through the Clothworkers' bursary allowed Leonard to see others believe in him and his craft and abilities as an actor. This allows him to balance his self-critical tendencies and employ a healthy level of self-reflection.

"Getting the bursary has opened up the vistas of my career beyond the boundaries of the who-you-know theatre scene in Dublin and confirmed for me a million times over how this is what I want to do with my life.

"On the most practical level, I never would have been able to pay for the training and living costs. It has allowed me to relax about financial worries and focus on the work and making the very most of my time in RADA.

"There was no form of government grant available to me in Ireland, and though I'd lived frugally, worked, saved tirelessly in the years prior to my acceptance, and crowdfunded as much as I could afterwards, my household income couldn't begin to dream of covering the tuition fees, never mind the cost of rent, travel and living.

"Before I left Ireland, I worked steadily as an actor and composer and was beginning to get slightly higher-profile jobs. However, I would have come to a dead end with no formal training; and I certainly never would have had the option of

working in the UK or the States.

“This bursary meant that I could train at the most prestigious school in the UK (if not the world), and it has made me expand my own limits of what I thought myself capable of. I am now far more ambitious about the boundless prospects of my career post-graduation.”

Lee Menzies, leading Broadway, West End and touring theatre producer and chair of The Laurence Olivier Bursary panel, commented that

*“Young people are the life blood of the arts. We find that a lot of them have a first degree, but their location creates a geographical squeeze. The bursaries get them through the final year, because performing and rehearsing gives them a chance to focus on their study. There are lots of dance and drama awards floating about but nothing else. When they are studying there is no time to be working as well. This is all about giving: if one of them goes to NY or LA, makes it big, they give it back to the exchequer, as well as giving it back to the arts and providing joy. We try to marry need to talent.”*

### *Organisational & sectoral growth through greater inclusivity*

The partners, LAMDA, RADA and NYT, have found that as the student body is diversifying, they have had an opportunity to learn about the support needs and barriers facing disadvantaged students. The schools reported that they have had to increase pastoral care and support, and students were taking up counselling, student wellbeing, physio, etc. because they would not be able to access them otherwise. Similarly, the partners have found that these new students are becoming facilitators who are bringing benefits to others through sharing their experiences and journeys, particularly in local schools, and partner schools. Again, this reflected the stories told to us by some individual bursary holders and demonstrates how opening up access and opportunities inspires people to share their experience and inspire others.

*“They are showing children that they can do this, too.”*

With the technical students, the programme rotates their studies across all areas of production and operation to prepare them for the tech-heavy jobs of the future and ensure they are work-ready by being adaptable and multi-skilled. As well as making individuals future-work-ready, this aligns with SOLT’s intention and initiatives to innovate and support change within the industry. This type of forward-thinking training also gives the students great value for money and enables them to train in more areas of expertise than offered by other courses.

*“The main challenge is the scale of need: more widespread need (inequality in modern Britain), more demand.”*

Partners felt that the Bursary Scheme had been successful through providing the opportunity to support students through their whole acting/tech course, providing continuity and stability. The flexibility was very important for the grant-givers, as well as it being enough to make a tangible difference to the students in receipt of bursaries and thus to their learning outcomes.

For some of the partners, it had enabled them to have conversations and discussions at a strategic level, which went beyond greater student representation, and to consider broader questions about diversity and representation in their organisations, such as, *“Who do we see teaching our students? Who do we see heading up our departments, leading and making decisions?”* As one partner said:

*“it has opened our eyes and discussion about what representation really means, and how inclusion goes beyond our student intake.”*

LAMDA is now considering how it brings the pastoral and welfare elements together in one operational area, so that students find it easy to identify the support available and to bring expertise and knowledge together, whilst RADA also reported that they were enhancing the support offered to their students.

# The Clothworkers' Foundation Regional Theatre Awards

## Review of issues facing regional theatres

Overall there is considerable evidence to suggest that many regional theatres – and theatres in general – are experiencing tough times. The Clothworkers' Foundation has responded to the complexity and issues facing the theatre industry sector by supporting regional theatres that are creating new initiatives as well as those that are struggling with the difficult public funding environment which impedes their creativity. The issues facing regional theatres can be attributed to the following factors.

### *Decline in local authority subsidy*

Cuts to local authority budgets now mean Local Authority funding accounts for only 4% of theatre sector income. This has led to increased reliance on private funding across the theatre sector, suggesting that 86% of finance “at work in the theatre industry stems from the private sector.... 73% of total income is from philanthropy”.<sup>26</sup> However, as the Arts Council England *Analysis of Theatre in England* notes, a small number of the largest organisations (e.g. RSC and NT) generate a disproportionate amount of earned income.

### *The dominance of London in the theatre industry*

UK Theatre/SOLT data highlights the industry dominance of central London theatres and large-scale companies in terms of producing output, at 54% of national total, achieving 60% of national audience total visits and 75% of the national total of box office income. London also receives 45% of ACE funding, with the regions receiving 55%. 36% of National Portfolio Organisations are based in London and receive 24% of all NPO funding.<sup>27</sup>

### *Producing theatres becoming presenting theatres*

Stephen Hetherington, Chairman of HQ Theatres Trust, voicing his concerns to the House of Lords inquiry into skills for the theatre industry, warned there could be a “serious decline” in new productions due to a lack of funding. “*A theatre company comes with a level of subsidy, and often theatres can only receive money because a show is subsidised. Local authority reduction in spending is having an increasing effect in driving producing theatres to become presenting theatres.... and that is going to lead to problems if we don't have the product to put in front of the public. It's like a supermarket that does*

---

<sup>26</sup> Arts Council England Analysis of Theatre in England Final Report by BOP Consulting & Graham Devlin Associates September 2016

<sup>27</sup> [researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7655/CBP-7655.pdf](https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7655/CBP-7655.pdf)



*not have the product to sell.*" This leads to a reduction in local jobs, cultural infrastructure and opportunities for careers in the creative sectors.

### *A decline in attendance at regional theatres*

UK Theatre figures show that regional theatre attendance has fallen over the past two years, as has the total box office income, leading to a warning from its president, Fiona Allan, that this could indicate a shift towards prices becoming unaffordable for audiences<sup>28</sup> The average ticket price at regional theatres has also risen by 1.5% to £25.08.

In this context, the Clothworkers' support for regional producing theatres in England via a one-off block grant to a producing theatre, the annual competitive £150,000 Clothworkers' Theatre Award, assumes considerable importance in the context of the overall finance available to theatres.

---

<sup>28</sup><https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/2018/record-slump-in-regional-theatre-attendance-leads-to-warning-over-ticket-prices/>

## Regional Theatre Awards: outcomes and impacts

The Clothworkers' Foundation wished to understand what impact the Award has had on the winning theatres, the regions in which they are located, and on project participants. The brief also asked that the research include a sample of unsuccessful applicants, to find out whether they intended to or did pursue the project despite not winning the Award. This useful addition to the evaluation brief enables Clothworkers' Foundation to place the impact in the context of the bigger picture. This stage of the evaluation is intended to explore the outcomes and impacts for the Award-winning theatres, common themes, successes and challenges, as well as taking a snapshot of how the Award has impacted on theatres two and three years after the completion of their original projects.

By learning about what was most effective and impactful, as well as sustainable, The Clothworkers' Foundation will be able to consider how the Awards might be developed, linking them to talent development, skills-building and making theatre, or further refined to support The Clothworkers' Foundation's goals and support disadvantaged people to access and be part of the dramatic arts.

The annual Award was given to a regional producing theatre in England. The prize could be used for anything from capital works to sponsoring a touring production but not to supplement to the theatre's core operational funds. In selecting the winner of the Award, the Clothworkers' Foundation considered factors such as the theatre's recent achievements, and the strength of the project proposal including the impact it hopes to make.

A different region was selected each year; the Southwest was the 2014 region with the Theatre Royal Plymouth winning the award, followed by Yorkshire in 2015 when the Award was won by York Theatre Royal. 2016 was the turn of the Northeast and the Northwest with Northern Stage receiving the award. The Midlands was the chosen region for 2017 with Derby Theatre as the beneficiaries of the £150,000 Award. Lastly, 2018 saw Queen's Theatre Hornchurch in the Eastern region win the Award.

### Findings

As might be expected from such an unusually open brief, each winning theatre had a different plan and approach to the opportunity to grow and extend audiences: Plymouth chose to build profile and touring opportunities through exploring the opportunities and challenges of West End transfers in these straitened times; Northern Stage Company created new productions with new groups of young people from the most deprived parts of Newcastle, whilst the Queen's Theatre in Hornchurch is focusing on the infrastructure – the product – with commissions and performances by Essex based writers and actors. York Theatre Royal built on solid foundations to extend their reach and range of productions and audiences, and Derby Theatre Royal took a two-pronged approach to effective community engagement, attendance and participation.

#### *Developing the infrastructure*

As Plymouth Theatre Royal acknowledges, "*Plymouth is a very long way from anywhere else*", which presents challenges and disadvantages in an industry which is largely focused

on London. Specifically, like many regional theatres, but exacerbated by its sheer physical distance from London, the theatre was finding it more and more difficult to get national critics to review shows, and therefore acknowledge its artistic success. Such recognition in the media drives audience figures and revenue. Therefore, it made sense to explore how regional theatres can maintain and sustain their national artistic profile and reputation by transferring and showcasing productions to London theatres. This would also support touring new, regionally produced theatre; this process has become similarly difficult through funding constraints.



Two shows, *After Elektra* (April de Angelis) and *Monster Raving Loony* (James Graham) transferred to The Kiln (as a partnership, not a hire) and Soho Theatre in 2015 and 2016. They both enjoyed good audience figures, but most importantly, many national reviewers attended, giving both productions very positive reviews (3/4 stars). However, the running costs in London and PR costs, with lower box office figures than the Theatre enjoys in Plymouth, meant that the Theatre had a shortfall. As a result, the initiative had to be supplemented by the Theatre's reserves. However, in fact it enabled Plymouth Theatre Royal to explore the development of a longer-term strategy for the cultivation of regional theatre makers and writers. The Theatre felt that the costs and difficulties incurred in transferring a show from a regional theatre to a London venue should not be underestimated by any other theatre thinking of doing this, specifically: "*Sourcing and hiring a suitable venue is costly and incurs a range of expenses; the logistical difficulties of simultaneously running a show at a location at some distance whilst running the home venue are stressful and time-consuming.*"

The value of this project, though, in terms of developing the infrastructure (or the product: theatre making and writing) was shown at the London press launch for the Theatre's London season, when James Graham (credits include: *Brexit: An Uncivil War*; *Ink*; and *A Labour of Love*) spoke about what the Regional Theatre Award had meant for his career, those of the people he worked with, and the industry.

The Theatre gained much:

- a presence – and seasons – in London that built credibility in the industry and garnered recognition for the Theatre that attracted local and regional audiences as a result.
- The coverage, artistic profile and recognition fostered a local sense of pride in the Theatre, especially from Plymouth City Council, and has been helpful in conversations with ACE.
- Exposure to different and more diverse audiences in London has been rewarding for the theatre, who have observed that London audiences are very culturally informed due to the huge range and choice of work available to them: this is very different from Plymouth's mixed and very loyal audiences.
- The financial support enabled the Theatre to take risks to realise the artistic ambitions they felt would have the greatest impact on the organisation: working with new writers, presenting work in London and thus increasing their ability to attract talent from London and beyond because of their artistic reputation.
- The Theatre has since appointed a new Head of Development in order to build on this opportunity by leveraging more funding to support these strategic artistic growth plans.
- 2017/18 plans included the development of co-producing partnerships to continue with a London season and take work to Edinburgh, to sustain the Theatre's reputation as a creative producer and achieve its artistic ambition.

Without the Regional Theatre Award, the Theatre would have struggled to sustain the transfer of productions to London, as it would require a significant uplift in core funding for the development and transfer of work. Furthermore, it would have been difficult for the Theatre to demonstrate the direct benefits a transfer to London would bring to local audiences to justify funding.

The same issue affected The Queen's Theatre in Hornchurch, recipient of the Regional Theatre Award in 2018, but from a different perspective. Situated in Essex but on the outer edges of East London, The Queen's Theatre is affected by the talent drain and industry focus on London – the range of choice open to drama critics impacts on attracting press coverage beyond local media. The Queen's is committed to nurturing local talent and thus meet local, regional and national needs, aiming to be a model of best

practice across its operations. Although progress is being made in how the Theatre's programming responded to the narratives and lived experiences of its Essex communities, with a new team and new productions in 2017-18, the financial costs involved in developing new product and audiences led to a deficit for the theatre.

The Regional Theatre Award, then, was focused on realising the ambitious, two-year Essex on Stage project, which champions new perceptions of Essex as a cultural place through celebrating theatre made by working class Essex artists – an ambition which recognised and addressed full-on the issue of class as a barrier to entering and thriving in the theatre industry.

*“Essex lacks the infrastructure to develop talent and this Essex on Stage project marked a step-change in opening up possibilities for talent development.”*

The Award has funded four new productions that reframe perceptions of Essex alongside supporting projects and opportunities for audiences and different communities in four Essex towns – a programme going far beyond the Theatre's current scale of operations and reach with clear goals:

- address negative and stereotypical perceptions of Essex
- increase opportunities for working class artists who have low aspirations<sup>29</sup>
- be relevant to and resonate with the local community by celebrating working-class narratives on stage
- target areas of low engagement and to introduce first-time arts experiences to Looked After Children.

To date, and bearing in mind that Essex on Stage is literally work in progress, the outcomes have been very promising:

- David Eldridge's **In Basildon**, was brought back to its Essex roots after the 2012 premiere at the Royal Court Theatre. The Queen's Theatre production was commended by The Stage for “*its strong sense of place... a patchwork of local references.*”<sup>30</sup> Through an open call, the show had a cast of 10 self-described working-class local actors, who faced barriers through education, low self-esteem and class, and who didn't feel “brave enough” to audition in London. **In Basildon** achieved 67% box office,

---

<sup>29</sup> Panic! Social class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries, Universities of Edinburgh and Sheffield, Arts and Humanities Research Council 2018

<sup>30</sup> [www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2019/basildon-review-queens-theatre-hornchurch-strong-performances/](http://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2019/basildon-review-queens-theatre-hornchurch-strong-performances/)

reaching a diverse audience, 35% of whom were new and within ACE protected characteristics, it generated a high volume of social media.

- A day of play readings by Essex playwrights drew an audience of 200, well in excess of anticipated numbers.

The next stage of this project is to develop Essex-themed and based work and to connect with other Essex venues in Southend, Thurrock and Harlow in order to build a community of theatres with which ACE does not proactively engage.

*“The biggest challenge is finding people to make this happen. We have the funds to subsidise the product and if these venues connect with us, it will be game-changing for Essex.”*

This comment underlines the fact that some regions have infrastructural weaknesses in their ecology and economy of theatre provision which have only deepened with nine years of sustained cuts. The experience of both Plymouth Theatre Royal and The Queen’s Theatre speak to the issues identified by SOLT in their most recent reports and indicate that financial support for regional theatres to build their artistic reputation whilst also making their work inclusive and relevant, and continued efforts to restore and revive the quality touring theatre networks that existed some years ago, are necessary for the industry to find new ways of working and producing that are sustainable for the future.

### *Building relationships with communities and making great art*

Both the Northern Stage Company (NSC) and York Theatre Royal chose to use their Clothworkers’ Foundation Theatre Awards to either build on successful, sustainable work with young people and new communities, or to extend their reach and the opportunity to make theatre for and by young people who had never experienced theatre before.

As a leading producing theatre, York Theatre Royal’s vision is to be recognised as vital to its community, with a programme of work that matches the diverse needs of the local community, and a network of regional, national and international relationships. The Theatre is recognised for its innovative work with young people, particularly its TakeOver Festival and for its approach to engaging communities in the co-creation of theatre-making.

The theatre used their Clothworkers’ Theatre Award to enable a landmark project for the re-opening of the Theatre after major capital works, including a season in which audiences became active spectators in order to engage the community in unique participation in cultural processes; a programming group to shape artistic programming; the TakeOver Festival for 2016-2018 produced by young people; a Youth Theatre cross-generational project; and a community production of a play to be performed across York.

The project overall sought to reinforce the sense of belonging and community cohesion that creates social capital; to reduce the isolation experienced by many people through creating opportunities to interact with other people and different generations; to widen the opportunities for work experience in a range of creative industries for young people to

alert them to new options for their futures; and to increase the confidence of project participants through coming together with others to create theatre work. The emphasis was to benefit hard-to-reach people who face social, cultural or financial barriers.

These themes were echoed in NSC's project, The Northern Stage Young Company. Young people were actively involved in shaping the portfolio of intended activities to include free skills workshops; public performance workshops; a leadership programme; work experience opportunities across theatre disciplines and short projects delivered with community organisations to increase awareness of the opportunities opened up through the Young Company.

Northern Stage, as the North East's major producing company, plays a strong role in developing the region's theatre ecology, as a maker and presenter of work and as a nurturer of talent. The Young Company works with young people aged 16-21 living in areas of economic disadvantage in Newcastle and Gateshead. Northern Stage is committed to broadening its audiences by increasing the number of productions, co-productions and residencies so that it presents a more diverse programme of work and developing its talent pool through creating new opportunities for theatre-makers and artists and for sharing practice. Northern Stage's Talent Development Programme has led to the recognition of the company as a centre of excellence for the training and support of theatre artists, with clear entry points spanning early career artists to established producers of ambitious work.

It was an entirely natural progression for the Award funding to create a project to raise the aspirations of young disadvantaged people who have little access to drama and creative opportunities in schools, and who have little opportunity to engage with creativity in a social context and less opportunity to make a career in the arts than their more affluent peers. For Northern Stage it was intended to broaden its base of participants and forge deeper connections in areas of deprivation leading to new individual opportunities and the creation of work more relevant and representative of diverse audiences. It was further intended to increase the Company's profile in its home-base and develop relationships with Higher Education institutions. Like Essex, Northern Stage is seeking to build the infrastructure locally and regionally, as well as making work that is relevant to more people of different backgrounds and lived experiences.

Both projects had great outcomes that directly align with The Clothworkers' Foundation objectives. As well as engaging young people with the activities and opportunities, the Awards gave the Theatre two years to build sustainable relationships and support young people as their interests and talent were developed. There have been numerous works and volunteering opportunities, opening up the theatre industry to many more young, disadvantaged people than would have been possible, not least because of restricted funding. For York, the funding was the only way that TakeOver could continue; there were no other funding sources to enable it to take place. Regional theatres are reliant on Trusts and Foundations to support outreach; Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding supports YTR's core programme but does not extend to projects such as TakeOver.

In the case of the NSC, the funding made it possible to involve many young people who would not have been able to afford the travel or day to day costs, as 39% of the 686

young people who took part needed bursaries to attend sessions. Addressing the paucity of information and advice about theatre industries easily available to young people, 31% of their participants were not in education of any kind. Providing opportunities, the chance to meet others and explore ideas were valued by the participants: *“sharing your passion with so many diverse people”, “freedom to be yourself”, “a place to be you.”* As 30% of young people in Newcastle live in poverty, the Young Company bursaries and targeting has made a significant difference to a good number of young people, not least in just giving them a voice often unheard:

*“Doors are not opened for them; they are not even shown the doors that are there. Young people are so often marginalised and accused. The Clothworkers’ Theatre Award enabled opportunities for disadvantaged young people to be expanded and to open those doors by giving them training and experiences that allow them to compete with their wealthier peers and to give them agency to present themselves.”*  
Kate Denby, NSC

This approach chimes very strongly with the Bursary Awards via RADA, LAMDA and NYT, and creates a cohesive flow of potential new talent off and onstage from the regions to London and out again to support regional theatre-making.

YTR also found that the 2016 and 2017 TakeOver Festivals had themes that attracted more diverse young people and had opened opportunities to work with other diverse groups:

*“Commissioning new work with different young people has changed the Theatre’s atmosphere and creates another dimension to our work. The Clothworkers’ Theatre Award allowed us to open up new areas and to build new relationships with diverse social groups in our community, rather than focusing on short-term one-off projects.”*

### *Embedding sustainability*

Each of the five theatres has addressed the issue of sustainability differently, with different outcomes: like YTR and NSC. Derby Theatre sought to carve out a unique role by demonstrating how a theatre can adopt new roles and responsibilities towards its community. Its re-imagining of the possibilities of regional theatre was rooted in being a learning theatre with a transformational artist development programme, and this transition from Derby Playhouse, a regional repertory theatre, to Derby Theatre as a Learning Theatre Model was enabled by the intervention of the University of Derby. This has also brought financial stability although the Theatre still faces the issue of standstill funding and increasing costs. The Theatre Award enabled Derby to fuse its strengths in community participation and learning with the creation of high-quality theatre, by taking theatre to communities in deprived areas who may never have seen its work. In addition, Derby wanted to open up opportunities for Deaf creatives and provide high quality Deaf theatre for its communities. The project has focused on two strands: *Our Place*, which invited the communities the Theatre wanted to connect with into the Theatre; and *Your Place*, which took the Theatre out into those communities.





*Our Place* developed a large-scale production of *The Jungle Book* for families, featuring professional actors working alongside community members, and achieving the objective to create opportunities for deaf people through the inclusion of 3 deaf actors in the professional cast; a deaf Associate Director and a Deaf Creative Associate. In response to targeted recruitment by the Theatre's community engagement team, 73 people, aged from 8 to 60, were auditioned: all were new to the Theatre, all had different reasons for wanting to participate, from wanting to be part of something, to do something they could be proud of. The range of roles and responsibilities is impressive and demonstrates that participation and understanding of theatre-making at a wider community level is an equally valid way of ensuring engagement is sustainable.

The Theatre worked with community representatives on *Your Place* to understand the issues that mattered to those communities – loneliness, social and geographical isolation, teenage crime – and then explored these issues in three productions which toured to venues in some of the most deprived and struggling areas of Derby, places were selected that were trusted local community spaces where local people socialise, thus removing the barrier of fear of crossing the threshold of unfamiliar places such as theatres. The shows enabled venues to provide an additional benefit to their local community – their regular programmes include quizzes and wrestling. The Clothworkers' Theatre Award enabled Derby Theatre to present shows that addressed issues and challenged perceptions – and, importantly to take an artistic risk, so a “*fun night out at the local pub took on a new dimension and opened up conversations.*”

The level of funding and timescale for delivery afforded by the Theatre Award made a significant difference to Derby, just as it had for Plymouth and York Theatre Royal, NSC and The Queen's Theatre. In this case, the funding extended the reach of the Theatre with the range of communities engaged, through an on-street recruitment drive by the Community Ambassadors, and providing valuable organisational learning, such as projects with Deaf participants that require depth of engagement rather than focusing on the number of people involved. The Theatre is considering ways to sustain these two models

because it has made a significant difference to their thinking about their role in developing best practice as a regional theatre in an area of deprivation:

*“How can we make this a normal and not a “different” way of working?”* |

The Theatre aimed to co-produce a production with hard-to-reach communities in their own neighbourhoods, working side-by-side with theatre professionals. Derby Theatre staff have been trained to disseminate many aspects of theatre practice and DT has created many routes through which people can learn skills.

This project intended overall to broaden horizons and raise aspirations for individuals and families and to respond to the need to develop the diversity of art attenders. Specifically, it looked to address the need for quality theatre for Deaf people; for more creative work for family audiences; more community integration into theatre productions; to increase access to quality arts experiences for people from socio-economically challenged backgrounds; to increase pathways into the theatre industry for socio-economically challenged participants; to address the lack of support for female voices on the stage and in creative and leadership roles in the arts and to address the needs of Derby’s young people, including those being home-schooled.

Each theatre has been able to test and then build sustainability for their long-term growth and development, obviously to different degrees of success. Those with an active community engagement, participation and co-creation element have brought together new partners and collaborators and produced high quality work with in-depth engagement for participants and new, relevant theatre for new and existing audiences, in a range of places. This has great value for ensuring that regional theatre is relevant and open to regional audiences, especially potential and new audiences who do not necessarily visit theatres but want dramas and theatre that speaks to them and that they recognise. This need is met through ensuring a wider range of people from different lived experiences are represented on- and off-stage, writing and making theatre with their voices through the bursaries: this demonstrates how these two aspects of funding should be seen as complementary.

## Regional Theatre Awards: characteristics and issues

Essentially, through its funding awards The Clothworkers’ Foundation seeks to make a difference to those who are experiencing disadvantage. When we look at the state of the cultural and creative industries it is essential to futureproof these industries through nurturing a strong and diverse talent pipeline. We are seeing how local authority cuts are impacting on youth theatre and outreach and education provision within regional theatres, and that in turn impacts on the opportunities available to young people to build careers in theatre, as the local theatre is very often the catalyst for sparking their interest in such a career.



The talent pipeline is a critical factor for the theatre industry, but so is the need for audiences, participants and supporters of local and regional theatre. Recognition of this chain of cause and effect is what made The Clothworkers' DAI a neatly dovetailed proposition. The outcomes of the Regional Theatre Awards were successful in terms of the impacts each theatre made on audience development and engagement, supporting interest and talent in theatre through participatory and co-creation of new productions, as well as hyper-local touring into non-theatre spaces and creating sustainable relationships with new communities. Plymouth Theatre Royal extended its profile and geographical reach with London seasons, developing venue partnerships and co-producing again, diversifying and extending their audiences and the work they create. NSC in particular has made particular efforts to showcase the creative and career opportunities to young people who would never have considered these options before. Longitudinal tracking will reveal if these participants make the transition to higher or further education in theatre or full-time careers through apprenticeship opportunities.

For example: a positive outcome has been the approach taken by Northern Stage, by directing its Award funding to a planned and strategic approach to make real and inspiring changes to the lives of disadvantaged young people in very challenging environments in urban areas. There's been a very clear sense of development as to how the theatre can make an intervention to develop the talents and longer-term futures of young people, and as a result the Award enabled Northern Stage to engage with over 600 young people.

By contrast, the experience of Theatre Royal Plymouth has brought limited benefit to local audiences or to those experiencing disadvantage. In some ways, it could be said to interpret a perceived disadvantage as a business issue. The remote location of the Theatre is seen to preclude recognition and acknowledgment of its artistic value in the

industry. This therefore puts the Theatre at a disadvantage in terms of attracting talent, creating new work and finding ways to tour to theatres such as the Theatre Royal Bath. Although the Theatre feels that the initiative enabled by the Clothworkers' award has raised its profile and enabled it to undertake the production and transfer to London of new work, it is questionable whether this was financially viable and sustainable without considerable investment.

The experiences of the Regional Theatre Awards demonstrate the value of a joined-up approach – and the need for that joined-up thinking which so concerns and vexes SOLT and UK Theatre. Producing theatre needs to be supported regionally to actively encourage young people to take up careers across all aspects of the theatre industry, and to create a ladder of progression that connects young people in the regions with leading theatre schools.

### *Different models for different situations*

All reflect in different ways the difficulties faced by regional theatres in having the resources to address the longer-term industry needs of developing the talent of younger people and the next generation of theatre makers – given the decline in funding sources being experienced by many regional theatres.

Where Regional Theatre Award winners have shown commitment to nurturing the talent of new and next generation of theatre makers, across all aspects of running, programming and performing staged productions, there is a clear link to The Clothworkers' Foundation's ambition of supporting talent. But, without external funding, will this be sustainable, especially if the creation of core product as a producing house is facing uncertainty?

Northern Stage, Derby Theatre and Queens Theatre Hornchurch saw the Clothworkers' Theatre Award as an opportunity to rethink the role of regional theatre in areas and communities that are experiencing disadvantage. Their desire is to reach new and different audiences: to resonate with the local community and be relevant to their local areas.

### *Organisational change and redefined ambitions*

Commitment to achieving more resilient business models that can support artistic risk and innovation while balancing artistic and financial considerations is an ongoing challenge in the current financially troubled climate. Standstill or reduced funding is impacting on opportunities for engagement with theatre from programme makers to audiences. It is accepted this must be funded realistically to be successful and to build respect and consolidate engagement now and in the future.

Lack of opportunities in schools for drama and creative disciplines is impacting on young people's aspirations and understanding of the possibilities in theatre-making. This is reflected in recent arts media coverage of a fall in arts A-levels being taken yet again. In the longer term, this will impact on the industry at large, with skills shortages as well as a less diverse workforce as any progress made is lost because only young people with financial resources and cultural capital can afford to work in the arts and cultural sectors.

## Regional Theatre Awards: unsuccessful applicants

The evaluation brief also highlighted a desire to learn from the invitation-only application process, the amount and type of data required, a response to the attractiveness of the proposition and size of fund. We took a small selection of four unsuccessful applicants: Belgrade, Coventry; Mercury Theatre, Colchester; Hull Truck; and Oldham Coliseum. We conducted telephone interviews with key representatives, alongside the original applications, and asked:

- How the process was in terms of the level of detail or forward planning required, the time to prepare, whether the application was straightforward, communication effective and feedback available.
- Whether the theatres had been able to realise the original project either through modifying it or securing funding elsewhere.
- What impact the unsuccessful application had on the theatre's overall plans (e.g. capital programmes, community development, etc)

This is a very small selection upon which to base decision-making but provides a useful snapshot and openness on the part of The Clothworkers' Foundation to learning and improving. The theatres responded quickly; the staff were still in role or promoted and so the organisational memory of the Regional Theatre Awards was good. The unsuccessful applicants all appreciated the opportunity to reflect on their experience of the process, and what had happened or not happened as a result.

### *Process, communication and feedback*

First and foremost, all the respondents welcomed the open brief presented by the Awards, the opportunity to build on core business or to experiment:

*"It was a joy in the sense that it was very simple to do and for us it was very much what we were trying desperately steering away from, which was doing random projects – it was part of the core of what we wanted to do."*

Whilst the theatres recognised the aspirational opportunity of the Awards, three of the four we spoke to felt that the amount of detail required in such a competitive award was onerous for hard-pressed organisations:

*"For the amount of money, the application was onerous; we've written half as much for twice as much money and got it."*

*"...it was a pretty sizeable piece of work, needed very diligent business plan which was very detailed, all the organisational detail, outputs, exploring the risks, outcomes, need and budget... thinking back, it was noted that it had been about 2-3 weeks' work for 3 people."*

*"We thought it was more detailed as a first-round application than we are used to working with... there were 10-12 pages that wouldn't normally be provided at a first"*

*round. The amount of detail was way above other bids we write, and this can be problematic in that we don't cut and paste applications. We tailor each one."*  
*"All the documentation had to be put together from quite a few years ago."*

On the other hand, one theatre (with a very experienced CEO) felt that:

*"It was very easy, we'd done a lot of the planning and thinking around the bid, so that's why we thought this is a good fit... The process was simple, and we were disappointed, but it was fine; I have had bigger disappointments when I've worked on a proposal. It was competitive but we still got the benefit of having gone through the process and could pick it up and apply to other funders. Very positive."*

One theatre, however, admitted that putting together proposals can sometimes be challenging from an internal perspective: *"The challenge is collaborating between different departments, rather than meeting The Clothworkers' criteria."* All the theatres touched on the issue of the time it takes to prepare cogent, thought-through proposals, and one pointed out that the higher level of detail at the first stage presents more barriers for some:

*"[There's] also the issue of which organisations have people to do nothing but applications and those who don't, who have to decide whether or not to put in the application because it pushes core business to one side."*

This is an important point for The Clothworkers' to consider, especially if the Dramatic Arts Initiative is continued.

Three of the theatres recommended that The Clothworkers' Foundation could consider a two-stage process for future awards, not just for their convenience, but also to manage expectations in a highly competitive field. We concur, pointing out that this could make the processing stages more manageable for the Grants Department and panels, too, with clear criteria about the type of project that The Foundation wish to see coming forward.

Three of the four respondents had been disappointed by the lack of feedback in letting them know they were unsuccessful, mainly because they find feedback helps them to understand and improve for next time:

*"I couldn't find any in my files. Couldn't even find a 'sorry you didn't get it'. I think we just heard that Derby got it. **It's very rare to get feedback**, but with only ten applications, some would have been good: feedback on our application and how it didn't quite come up to the criteria."*

*"Think that they should have provided quite detailed feedback for the amount of work put into the application. We do listen to feedback; we welcome the opportunity to change a bid and re-work it. Or some granular detail in the*

*guidelines about what the funder wanted, and a bit more direction about what the Clothworkers' wanted to achieve."*

*"The feedback was unsatisfactory, but we didn't want to chase it. Getting decent feedback which isn't cut and paste or mealy-mouthed is an issue across the board. At both ends, it's quite brave to ask for feedback."*

*"I don't think we did get much feedback, would have been good to have feedback on the proposal itself – did you feel it was viable? That would have been good to have, taking into consideration that there might have been other priorities (the trustees), particularly to know if we could adapt it for other people... I did follow it up and we didn't fit the priorities for that year."*

It was surprising that most applicants did not take the initiative and seek feedback when it did not arrive, especially as the one applicant who did contact Head of Grants direct found that:

*"[they were] so approachable, sensible, very nice, didn't just tell us to go away. I feel we've established a good relationship, which is part of the battle, and whilst it might not have monetary value, we'd like to nurture the goodwill, not just a transactional relationship. Stands out for being decent, in comparison with other trusts and foundations."*

### *Grant or competition: different models of funding*

It should be noted that the issue of how much information was required was also mentioned in the same breath as the level of competition from the other invited applicants but also in the announcements:

*"Everyone applying was very well established and had significant track records."*

*"It felt that they were offering money for something ready to go, rather than developmental work which would roll out."*

*"It felt like it was a competition, with the results announced at Theatre Awards, very public, unlike the usual process of putting in a bid and getting feedback/answer. We felt awkward about asking for feedback because it felt more like a competition than a grant award process."*

*"We took on board it was competitive, announced at a lunch, very public."*

The profile and recognition of the contribution of regional theatres to the theatre industry were well understood by the respondents, and they appreciated the profile of the Regional Theatre Awards. However, this unusual method of announcing a grants programme clearly pushed some fund-raisers out of their comfort zone. On reflection, the only aspect of this invitation-only grant application process that was radically different from other such schemes was the announcement at a high-profile public event, at a key event in the theatre industry. Perhaps a clearer explanation of the rationale

behind this –of wishing to put regional theatre and innovative development projects centre-stage (as it were) for an evening – would address this issue.

### *Impact on being able to realise plans*

Our non-Award recipients that responded had been able to realise aspects, sometimes large parts of their application, either through using the experience to refine the proposition and secure funding or other partnerships, or through other initiatives such as City of Culture. Whilst they all agreed that at the time of application the projects would have been a “springboard”, “rocket fuel” or otherwise speeded up the plans of which their projects were part, none of the theatres had had to completely shelve the ideas:

*“[It had] Very little [negative impact], because City of Culture came along – lucky. [We would] probably just have a limited version. We’re not chasing the funding, we’re trying to do more of it, trying to make it deeper and broader engagement. Other opportunities did happen [but if not], we would have put into another application to another foundation and bigger and better.”*

*“As an organisation we remain committed to working in deprived areas of the city, if we had run it, we would have had a chance to work with communities, and it would have laid the foundations best. The evaluation from 2017 indicated we didn’t reach the least engaged, this might have speeded it up. Still working on two estates, but it would have enabled us to put in the resources.”*

*“We did carry on with trying to appeal to South Asian audiences and participants, but not at the scale funding would have allowed. It’s fair to say that it’s not as strategic as we would have liked if CWF had been successful. If we’d done it, we’d have a more measured and evidence-based attempts to engage with Asian audiences – legacy. It would have been a boost to get it going, but at the very least, would have provided us with real evidence about the difficulty of the landscape.”*

*“No negative impact. We refocused that area of work and then because we were shortlisted, we had more in-depth conversations with [our partners] and it’s staying as a live area of work that we want to address. Not shelved. [The Award] would have helped us move forwards immediately: a significant sum of money to invest over an expanded period of time, would have enabled us to integrate this within the programme and we will look at other ways to do it, but it would have given us the security to invest in the development work.”*

### *Conclusions*

The main changes that could be of benefit to invited theatre applicants, and The Clothworkers’ Foundation, would be:

1. A two-stage application process to streamline the process and manage expectations; initial pre-application with the concept and broad outline for delivery for the panel to assess applications and shortlist; followed by a fuller application with the detail regarding programme, budget, resources, etc.



2. A formal process to give feedback to unsuccessful applications, perhaps using the panel's notes and scoring, so that applying theatres can learn and improve.

## Successes, challenges and learning

*"Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm" Ralph Waldo Emerson* |

### Successes

The significant benefit of the bursaries is the **depth of engagement** they have enabled through providing the opportunity for individuals to immerse themselves in the world of theatre-making. On the other hand, the key benefit of the Regional Theatre Awards was the **breadth of engagement** they opened up, due to the range of projects, the scale of ambition and strategic goals designed to address some of the most pressing challenges in the economy and ecology of the regional theatre sector.

The Dramatic Arts Initiative has met its goals and made a significant contribution to nurturing the talent of today and the future and ensuring participating regional theatres have the freedom to engage with their communities in new ways.

- **Funding bursaries:** this model of investment has had the greatest impact and best reflects The Clothworkers' Foundation's philosophy of making a significant difference to disadvantaged people. The model directly connects their funding to benefit individuals. The financial support awarded, as this study reveals, makes a life-changing impact on those individuals.



- **Developing the talent pipeline:** The bursaries have a strategic importance in creating a broader sectoral impact through developing the talent pipeline which fuels industry success by providing proactive support to talented people who are held back through disadvantage.
- **Extending the reach of regional theatres:** The Regional Theatre Awards have given producing theatres the opportunity to build sustainably on existing success and to extend their audience reach or engagement. This feeds the theatre industry with future audiences, attenders, participants, supporters, and talent – through creating programmes that give opportunities to more people and communities that experience different form of disadvantage.
- **Filling an important gap:** the regional theatres that focused on audience engagement, often producing work as a result, identifying local talent and bringing new people into the industry – enjoyed tangible results with meaningful outcomes for individuals who can be overlooked. The Regional Theatre Awards filled an important gap as their projects also fell into the bracket of being difficult to fund elsewhere.
- **Reaching new audiences for the theatre:** those regional theatres have begun to develop new habits for theatre going and familiarity with what was a quite exclusive world with its own language habits and patterns by taking theatre out into communities and engaging people in new ways.
- **A positive experience for partners:** the four partners – RADA, LAMDA, NYT and SOLT/UK Theatre – all found that working with The Clothworkers' Foundation on the DAI has proved a beneficial and positive experience for their organisations. Partners found The Clothworkers' Foundation encouraging to work with. They have given partners the flexibility to apply the funds to meet the best outcomes and they found this level of trust hugely beneficial, as well as making a tangible difference to learning outcomes of the students in receipt of bursaries.
- “The Clothworkers' have been great partners – they let us get on and deliver as we said we would, but they have been supportive and involved, particularly with the students.”

All the partners would welcome the opportunity to continue the relationship for another five years, as it has been game-changing for individual students.

- **The level of engagement and enthusiasm** the partners received from The Clothworkers' Foundation Members has been welcomed. Members have attended productions at partner drama schools and have given their personal encouragement and support to bursary holders. They have visited the regional venues to see and hear about the outcomes of their investment. Such support and encouragement have been mentioned in our interviews and meetings with partners, bursary holders and other

stakeholders; this is quite an unusual situation and one which we have not come across before.

- **Positive action to address disadvantage.** The Dramatic Arts Initiative has taken a valuable and practical step in addressing some of the crucial issues facing not just the Theatre industry but the broader issue of creating access to opportunity for people experiencing disadvantage. A particular instance is the Northern Stage initiative, which has been very successful in including the excluded and introducing them to opportunities that they didn't even know existed, which is making a major impact on some of the most disadvantaged young people in a very disadvantaged area.
- **Raising the profile of The Clothworkers' Foundation** through productive interaction with lead industry bodies such as SOLT/ UK Theatre and prestigious academic institutions with strong reputations for industry success.
- **The level of personal interest.** The Clothworkers' Foundation has shown a particular interest in the National Youth Theatre, in watching the progress of Bursary holders such as Luke Thallon. Partners, Bursary holders and Regional Theatre Award recipients noticed and appreciated the personal touch of Foundation Members. They noted how this level of engagement contrasts with other funders who can be very hands-off to the extent of not appearing interested.

### *Challenges*

- **Impacts of lack of general awareness.** This project has revealed the limited awareness of those responsible for careers advice to young people about the career perceptions and opportunities in the arts and creative industries. Whilst it is not clear how this issue could be addressed, it is important to reiterate its importance. Industry bodies are very concerned that the reduction in teaching of arts and creative subjects in schools will decrease the number of young people considering careers in these areas. The creative industries contributed £92bn to the UK economy in 2016 and the sector is growing at twice the rate of the economy.
- **Funding individuals or organisations?** The Regional Theatre Awards seemed less satisfying to The Clothworkers' Foundation Members as the benefits are not so direct, apparent and rewarding as in the case of the individuals where there has been a very direct life-changing impact.
- **Building critical mass.** Whilst the Bursaries and Regional Theatre Awards are helping to address some of the challenging issues facing the theatre industry, could The Clothworkers' Foundation take a greater role in extending and expanding the talent pipeline that feeds the theatre industry, to increase inclusivity and both the numbers and width of the pipeline regionally as well as in London?

- **Logistical aspects of assessing applications.** A challenge for The Clothworkers' Foundation was ensuring that applications from the regional theatres were considered fully and that time was available to engage with the individual bursary holders. The Clothworkers' Theatre Awards panel represented different aspects of the industry. In making decisions on the Awards, they would have liked personal presentations from the theatres to make their case, but this would have been time-consuming to achieve.
- **Level of funding awarded to regional theatres.** The panel sought proposals that would be game-changing for recipients. Although £150k is a substantial amount in terms of the funding parameters for many regional theatres, it is insufficient to support the production of a new work or to restore a part of the building. Most theatres asked for revenue projects because £150k is not enough to enable major capital development. Many of the theatres have further funded their initiatives from their reserves or other sources.
- **Sustainability of new regional theatre initiatives.** There are further issues with the regional theatres of ensuring the sustainability of the new initiatives funded; the available timescale; measuring success in audience engagement terms and recognition of the role of The Clothworkers' Foundation.
- **Attribution.** It is quite sometimes difficult to attribute impacts and outcomes of the projects by the Regional Theatres Award recipients solely to The Clothworkers' Foundation funding, because so many other factors are at play with how these theatres are funded, so The Clothworkers' Foundation becomes one of a number of funders, including Arts Council England, or other Philanthropic Trusts and Foundations, and thus its specific contribution is not clearly differentiated.

### *Learning*

Evaluation is a useful tool for organisational learning. We suggest that there needs to be an evaluation plan and strategy alongside any future initiatives, so that the learning and successes are captured as the project evolves and the longitudinal outcomes can be tracked.

In general, the cultural sector is hindered by a lack of longitudinal data which would support understanding of the long-term impacts of initiatives and programmes that seek to develop talent, sustainable audience development and engagement with communities.

Formative evaluation of future projects would benefit The Clothworkers' Foundation through provision of regular information to show the effectiveness of any investment and funding schemes on an ongoing basis. It would enable straightforward in-depth tracking and reflect the longer-term experience of funding recipients. This in turn would enable The Clothworkers' Foundation to assess the extent to which it is meeting its aims as a philanthropic organisation.

## Conclusions

Philanthropy is one of the few funding streams that is driven by personal interests and passions. Compared with other philanthropic organisations, what sets The Clothworkers' Foundation apart is that it seeks to make a difference in the world that is life-affirming and satisfies their core aims: to find innovative ways to maximise the impact of their giving and to which they can relate to at intellectual and emotional levels whilst addressing issues around social inequality. The Clothworkers' Foundation wishes to make a meaningful contribution and see positive impacts.

Many senior people in the theatre industry are convinced that hard work, effort and talent will lead to a career in the industry: meritocracy will win through. But as our research shows, lack of equality of opportunity or lack of connections, resources and capital (social and cultural) is at the root of the problem of social inequality – as a broader general social issue. These are the barriers that many people from a working-class background (including the intersections with ethnicity, gender, disability) encounter. People cannot



take advantage of opportunities that they don't know exist. The Theatre industry has acknowledged this needs to change and are now putting extensive programmes in place to redress this issue.

There are strong arguments for investing in arts and culture, especially the dramatic arts, in the way The Clothworkers' Foundation has done. Their investment and support have

addressed disadvantage, but further seeks to make lasting change to who represents us, writes, directs, performs and produces artistic work across our society's many-faceted arts and culture. Although focused on the dramatic arts, the beneficiaries of this investment are rippling out across theatre, TV, film, and digital media, resulting a potentially substantial legacy.

The findings on the impacts of the Dramatic Arts Initiative can be used by The Clothworkers' Foundation to continue the collaborations and partnership programmes. These outcomes can inform conversations and debate about a coherent talent pipeline with other Trusts that share the same ethos as The Clothworkers' Foundation: for example, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Trust, Calouste Gulbenkian, and also Arts Council England (under its stated goals of developing artistic talent and access to cultural entitlement).

The evaluation of the Dramatic Arts Initiative has opened up many issues for conversations and debates. It leads to reflection about the shape of our society: how our arts and culture look and sound in terms of who is included and who is missing; who makes and produces culture and ultimately for whom- as well as significant issues around social inequality and immobility.

The Dramatic Arts Initiative would benefit from some longevity to extend its reach and impact with formative and summative evaluation written into the process that enables The Clothworkers' Foundation to understand the impact of its investment year-on-year and adjust accordingly. This would result in an important sectoral contribution if the initiative were to be extended to ten years.

Our Rapid Review revealed there has been little exploration of the impacts on individual bursary recipients: such impacts are illustrated in the case studies of bursary-holders featured in this report.

## Individual bursaries

There is no doubt that the individual bursaries have been successful at every level:

- Supporting the career ambitions and potential of talented people who were being held back due to the disadvantage of low income or lack of financial support
- Enabling partner organisations to continue broadening and diversifying the student intake with the stability of five-year funding – this same security was passed on in full to the individuals
- Recognising talent and potential and the importance of both on- and off-stage excellence in industry recognised awards, supported by UK Theatre.

None of the individual bursary holders would have been able to progress to this stage either of study or career success without the support of The Clothworkers' Foundation, and the range of options offered by LAMDA, RADA and NYT made it possible for people

to develop their talent in a range of ways best suited to their needs and circumstances, whether as a nine-month bursary or a three-year honours degree.

There are drama schools and academies outside London, and some regions have well developed networks, opportunities and resources to offer clear routes into the dramatic arts or into arts and culture more generally, regardless of a young person's ability to pay. However, this provision is patchy across the country: the areas of highest deprivation are still the areas of least engagement and participation in arts and culture in general. The immersion in the world of theatre, moving away from home, working with other students who share similar passions and offer peer support have been essential benefits to the bursary holders and enabled them to really commit to their training and not be deflected by personal circumstances.

That is why it is important that these life-changing opportunities continue to be offered.

## Regional Theatre Awards

The outcomes of the Regional Theatre Awards contrast greatly. The Awards were created with the intention to “free up the mind”: to allow theatres receiving the Awards to set aside the day-to-day challenges and to imagine what could be achieved with a reasonable sum of money and time. The Clothworkers’ Foundation considered that an amount of £150k in the economy of a mid-scale theatre was sufficient to make an impact and allow possibilities to be realised.

The evaluation illustrates that the standard of projects is good but varied and reflects many of the issues facing mid-scale theatres. These include overall financial constraints that limit the product available for the mid-scale touring networks; a shortage of quality product combined with ageing theatres; and challenges facing the sourcing of funding for outreach and learning. The bigger industry challenge is how to nurture the middle-scale, as repertory theatres have almost disappeared.

With some exceptions, the Regional Theatre Awards in their current forms are not quite hitting the mark in terms of overcoming disadvantage. It would make more sense and more impact to strengthen the opportunities for young people to discover the dramatic arts in the regions and develop a more consistent pipeline of talent into drama schools and studies across the country. A mix of smaller grants and bursaries to regional theatres and individuals would build the infrastructure and opportunities driven by regional theatres for children and young people to discover theatre and drama, giving them a chance to find out what theatre offers them, and not having to resign themselves to years and years of low-paid jobs to pay for it all. The effectiveness of these elements in the Northern Stage and Derby Theatre projects offer interesting models and ways of working. As well as feeding into the leading drama schools, the regional talent pool for writing, acting, backstage and technical skills would be strengthened, which can only benefit the

theatre industry generally through increasing the diversity of the workforce, currently described as “hideously white”.

SOLT and the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation have recently investigated the diversity of the theatre workforce, including offstage roles.<sup>31</sup> Several initiatives aimed at greater inclusion and diversity are now emerging in response to the challenges of working in the industry with industry bodies now assuming more responsibility for its future shape. Stage Sight provides examples of practice. The emphasis on young people continues but collaboration and sharing of information will help provide opportunities for disadvantaged young people to access and explore the career possibilities offered by theatre. SOLT also wants to support freelancers who need re-training for new roles.

---

<sup>31</sup> Recent references to the embedded inequality issues. The Stage:  
<https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/2019/angry-residents-low-pay-soaring-rent-edinburgh-fringe/>



## Recommendations

The Clothworkers' Foundation Dramatic Arts Initiative took a two-pronged approach by offering a depth of engagement and support to individuals through the bursaries, and the opportunity to build breadth and depth of community engagement through the Regional Theatre Awards. This investment strand was united through the theme of breaking down barriers and opening up opportunities for people who are disadvantaged. The findings from the impact assessment indicate that the DAI succeeded in achieving its key goals, so the issue is the future direction and investment strategy for The Clothworkers' Foundation. These recommendations are intended to assist and inform this decision.

### Recommendations for the Bursaries Awards

- Continue and increase the number of bursaries to achieve industry qualifications for more substantial numbers: this investment has shown the greatest impact in creating value for individuals and bringing wider benefits to the cultural sector.
- Build upon the positive collaboration created with the UK's leading drama schools and widen the pipeline through enabling them to extend their reach country-wide. LAMDA noted that one of the initial barriers faced by many young people is finding the funding to travel to auditions and to pay the required audition fee. With support to reduce audition fees and/or waivers, it would expect to see an immediate difference in the range of students who apply and pursue a place there.
- Invest in industry bodies and organisations that can develop career and talent development pathways for disadvantaged people. LAMDA for example is particularly keen to widen access and participation and to extend the delivery of its talent pipeline workshops all around the country and to be open to other areas (such as working with those who are at risk of offending and other marginalised groups). As a further example, The Clothworkers' Foundation partnership with NYT could be extended to support its effective role in developing the talent pipeline for disadvantaged young people. NYT's suggestions for practical steps toward greater inclusion and participation include:
  - ◆ extending their Auditions Access Fund into 10 UK places – including schools where drama has been cut or access to quality drama is limited. *“If we went to where young people are rather than wait for them to come to us, we'd see a much broader range engaging”.*
  - ◆ expanding the Bursary Fund to offer more free auditions, interviews and subsidised places on Backstage Courses, as costs present barriers to inclusion.

- ◆ expand NYT discipline and skill areas in creative practice in digital skills which offer progression opportunities into the creative industries in jobs that schools are not preparing young people for.
- ◆ expand the Playing Up programme across the UK; develop new programmes such as Stepping Up, for young people leaving school with fewer than 5 GCSEs.
- ◆ NYT alumni are powerful advocates guiding young people in opportunities and career paths; Anna Anderson has worked at the National Theatre and with Cameron Mackintosh; Piers Shepperd, Technical Director for the London 2012 Ceremonies, with Danny Boyle, an NYT Member. NYT comments: *“You’ve seen the benefit of The Clothworkers’ Foundation Bursary for the NYT, supporting young people facing financial hardship in our high-quality free drama training. We’d love to offer more bursaries to young actors – and to our Backstage Members. West End production companies tell us recruiting BAME production crew is difficult. We’d love to target young people from groups underrepresented in our industry to take part in our Courses and Productions, working with commercial companies to enable progression routes into professional employment.”*
- As part of future initiatives, it is important that partners put structures in place that add value to the Bursary holders’ experience. These could include connecting up the bursary holders to create a cohort of advocates, supporters and mentors. This would enable individuals in different year groups and drama schools can feel connected to others and to feel part of a greater community, supported with networking events that enable experiences to be shared. Students facing barriers benefit from the support of those who faced the same hurdles and can show and model success.
- Promote the Bursary holders as very positive role models for other young people who are experiencing disadvantage and who want to make the most of their talents and skills but lack the information on entry routes and options to move forwards.
- Maintain the much-valued personal connections between The Clothworkers’ Foundation members in any future initiatives, through their visits and taking an interest in the people who are benefiting from the opportunities provided by their investment.

## Recommendations for regional theatre support

- The Regional Theatre Awards did not achieve the same successful impact or return on investment as the Bursaries. Although this strand led to a breadth of engagement for some communities and audiences, in most cases the sustainability of such initiatives is uncertain. The Clothworkers’

Foundation might consider whether the Awards should be reiterated at all. *Should* the decision be made to continue with a regional theatre strand, it is recommended that the Foundation review the focus, so that its investment is strategically directed to support specific initiatives by regional organisations and theatres that run active, innovative and inclusive programmes in areas of deprivation, rather than being award focused. This could be informed by Creative People and Places mapping which identifies areas of deprivation and the ‘cold spots’ of cultural infrastructure, investment and participation. These area options could be then synergised with existing programmes and initiatives run by NYT, for example, or the SOLT programmes coming onstream. The Clothworkers’ Foundation contribution would then be integral to ‘joining up the dots’ and actively support those who are driving change in the Theatre industry, for example through liaison with lead officers at Arts Council England re the new theatre hubs.<sup>32</sup>

- Clarity of purpose: criteria for investment in regional theatre could be strategically directed towards developing creative talent and potential; to projects relevant to communities and groups who are not usually represented onstage; to consolidating existing programmes that extend reach and broaden engagement, participation and opportunities for theatre-making.
- If The Clothworkers’ Foundation continues to make substantial awards in funding to regional theatres, we suggest they consider a two-stage application process: initial pre-application with the concept and broad outline for delivery for the panel to assess applications and shortlist; followed by a shortlisted and more detailed application. A scoring process should be considered so that unsuccessful applicants can receive appropriate feedback to support their learning.
- Maximise the knowledge emerging from the regional theatres as a result of their projects through opportunities for interaction and sharing knowledge and experience so that good practice is disseminated, and they benefit from each other’s learning, through working with the partner organisations who have networks and support structures in place. This would promote thinking about the role of regional theatres and

---

<sup>32</sup><https://www.wiredgov.net/wg/news.nsf/articles/Derby+Theatre+and+Bradforde+Theatre+in+the+Mill+to+lead+1.5million+Performing+Arts+Producing+Hub+pilots+29072019092500> Arts Council England has announced two pilot Performing Arts Producing Hubs; groups of theatres, arts organisations, social enterprises, community groups and other organisations which will work to support the performing arts sector in their local areas.

strengthen what is there – a really important outcome of the Dramatic Arts Initiative.<sup>33</sup>

- Disseminate the findings on the impacts of the Dramatic Arts Initiative to other key funders who are exploring the talent pipeline in the dramatic arts to build a reliable and compelling case for continuing to invest in more inclusive practices and opportunities for people who are disadvantaged or face additional barriers. This could be achieved through strategic Round Table discussions, bringing together interested parties to discuss particular themes or issues at a higher level.

## Supporting the Dramatic Arts Initiative

The Clothworker's Foundation has an effective, efficient, but small Grants Team which will need additional capacity in order to optimise the potential value of the initiative, manage the process (and expectations) and implement the recommendations made for the Bursaries and Regional Theatre Awards.

We recommend that:

- Monitoring of progress, tracking of longitudinal impacts and a formative evaluation framework should be put in place with any extension or development of the Dramatic Arts Initiative and a suitable budget allocated as part of the core costs.
- Ongoing evaluation and reflection would enable The Clothworkers' Foundation to understand the successes and impacts as they are emerging, see how the investment is delivering results as the Initiative rolls out, and if necessary, adjust or change elements. As well as a dynamic planning and monitoring tool, it would enable the impacts and learning to be brought together and enable an effective dissemination strategy so that the cultural sector benefits.
- A similar investment is made in the Grants team, either through enabling the flexibility to increase capacity or contracting expertise to support them, particularly with regard to the recommendations around creating a cohort and learning community for the Bursaries and Regional Theatre Awards, and changes in the application process. That is not to say that

---

<sup>33</sup> Sharing the Stage Learning Network brought together a group of theatres and created connections, shared learning, shared evaluation processes. This led to new partnerships and work being created. Unsuccessful applicants have partnered with other unsuccessful theatres as a consequence of being invited to apply; with a structure to support and nurture collaboration and partnership across the group, this would add value to the regional theatre work.

the Grants Team should increase in size permanently or take on more staff, but it should have access to short-term expertise or advice to support delivery and oversight. We would recommend the approach taken by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for Sharing the Stage, which has seen many collaborations and partnerships that have developed and are ongoing three and four years after the main initiative.

# THE CLOTHWORKERS' FOUNDATION

EVALUATION OF THE PROACTIVE  
DRAMATIC ARTS GRANTS INITIATIVE

*Supplementary materials*



## Contents

The Clothworkers’ .....	1
Rapid Review: Summary of Key Points .....	4
Definitions: Inclusion and Diversity.....	4
The Arts and the Creative Workforce .....	4
The View from Within.....	6
Inequalities of Class.....	6
Ideas of Meritocracy.....	8
Internships .....	8
Social Mobility.....	9
Ethnicity .....	11
Responses from partner organisations .....	13
Clothworkers’ Bursaries: partner organisations.....	13
LAMDA .....	13
RADA .....	14
SOLT/UK Theatre.....	15
National Youth Theatre .....	16
Responses from Regional Theatre Award recipients.....	17
Theatre Royal Plymouth (TRP) .....	17
York Theatre Royal (YTR) .....	21
Northern Stage Young Company .....	27
Derby Theatre (DT) .....	30
Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch (QTH).....	33
BAME representation and engagement within drama schools in the UK.....	36
Introduction.....	36
The interviews.....	37
Tyne.....	37
Grace.....	38
Ben .....	39
Ayesha.....	40
Russeni.....	42
Jacqui.....	43
Conclusions.....	46

Resources.....	48
ACE, Culture Change 2017.....	48
Arts Bursaries Evaluation, Weston Jerwood, 2014-16.....	48
National Scholarship Programme NSP Evaluation 2016.....	49
Rethinking Relationships.....	50

Cover image: Joe Mott (bursary holder) in *Journey's End*, RADA. Photo by Helen Murray.



## Rapid Review: Summary of Key Points

### Definitions: Inclusion and Diversity

Definitions are important. Diversity and inclusion are often used together and interchangeably, but it has been argued that they are separate and distinct constructs.<sup>1</sup>

- *Diversity* in the context of this study refers to demographic differences between people, including both observable (e.g. gender, race, age) and non-observable (e.g. culture, beliefs, education)
- *Inclusion* refers to how far an individual perceives themselves to be belonging or 'esteemed' (Shore et al<sup>2</sup>) on their own terms by their peers or colleagues. *Inclusion* refers to feeling freely able to express one's sense of difference from the mainstream - what Shore et al describe as one's sense of 'uniqueness'.

Mor Barak<sup>1</sup> argues that inclusion is the more significant concept, speaking to both integration and celebration of difference among groups in organisations and society. However, diversity is necessarily a precursor to inclusion. In a study of the UK Civil Service, Andrews & Ashworth<sup>3</sup> found that organisations which represent the diversity of their publics by gender and ethnic background are likely to be more inclusive work environments where lower levels of discrimination and bullying are experienced.

### The Arts and the Creative Workforce

There exists a significant amount of data to demonstrate that the arts and creative sector is dominated by well-educated older people of white ethnicity from middle-class backgrounds. Increasing concern is emerging that Britain's cultural and creative industries (CCIs) are increasingly dominated by the privileged. This stands in stark contrast to dominant policy narratives of the CCIs as meritocratic.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Mor Barak, M.E. (2015). Inclusion is the key to diversity management, but what is inclusion? *Human Service Organizations: Management, Leadership & Governance*, **39**, 83-88.

<sup>2</sup> Shore, L. et al (2011). Inclusion and diversity in work groups: A review and model for future research. *Journal of Management*, **37**, 1262–1289.

<sup>3</sup> Andrews, R.W. & Ashworth, R.E. (2013) [Determinants of representation: an empirical assessment of the UK civil service](#). *Policy & Politics*, **41**, 429-448.

<sup>4</sup> O'Brien D., Laurison, D., Miles, A. & Friedman, S. (2016) Are the creative industries meritocratic? An analysis of the 2014 British Labour Force Survey, Taylor and Francis Online, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09548963.2016.1170943>.

Research from Creative and Cultural Skills<sup>5</sup> into the creative and cultural sector across Britain show that employment is concentrated in small organisations (<5 employees) in England. At least 60% of cultural workers have degrees (compared to 34% for the general population); 38% are self-employed; and 9% are from BAME backgrounds (compared with 12% generally). Despite young people aged 16-19 making up over 3% of the population, only 2% work in the arts, a disparity of about a third.

That arts workers are more likely to have degrees is argued to be a reflection of the prevailing exclusivity and exclusion of the arts workforce - what CC Skills CEO Simon Dancey (2019)<sup>6</sup> has called a “closed shop” and a middle-class echo chamber. For example, the Arts Council's 2017 study *Character Matters: Attitudes, Behaviours, Values and Skills in the UK Museum Workforce*<sup>7</sup> found that 88% of museum employees have a first degree and 59% have a postgraduate qualification. Cartmell (2018)<sup>8</sup> argues that to get a break in the museum sector it is “well-known” that you need to have the right academic background and to have undertaken voluntary work, a situation which discriminates against those without a degree or the financial means to work on an unpaid basis.

A major study into the profile and attitudes of the arts sector by Brook et al 2018<sup>9</sup> confirms that the arts/cultural workforce is atypical and unrepresentative of the wider population in a range of ways. The quantitative/qualitative study found that the sector is predominantly affluent and middle class in its makeup and values, and that this represents a significant barrier to entry by working class people, particularly women and people from BAME backgrounds. The authors claim that there has been little progress in increased social mobility in the arts workforce over the past forty years.

A recent report from Arts Council England<sup>10</sup> found that the arts have made limited progress in diversifying their workforces in recent years, despite significant encouragement. Among National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs), 12% of 'core staff' are from BAME backgrounds, compared with 16% of the working age population, while 5% of arts staff identify as disabled compared with 20% generally. The disappointing rate of

---

<sup>5</sup> Creative and Cultural Skills Workforce analysis (2019) <https://ccskills.org.uk/whats-new/blog/a-closer-look-at-our-new-research-findings>

<sup>6</sup> Dancey, S, 2019 The Myth of Meritocracy. *Arts Professional* <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/article/myth-meritocracy>

<sup>7</sup> BOP Consulting with The Museum Consultancy 2016 Character Matters: Attitudes, behaviours and skills in the UK Museum Workforce [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Character\\_Matters\\_UK\\_Museum\\_Workforce\\_full\\_report.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Character_Matters_UK_Museum_Workforce_full_report.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Cartmell, C. 2018 Breaking into the museum sector *Arts Professional* <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/magazine/314/case-study/breaking-museum-sector>

<sup>9</sup> Brook, O, O'Brien, D and Taylor, M. (2018) Panic! Social class, taste and inequalities in the creative industries, <http://createlondon.org/event/panic-paper/>

<sup>10</sup> Arts Council England (2018). Equality, diversity and the creative case. Arts Council England. [https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Diversity\\_report\\_1617\\_FINAL\\_web.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Diversity_report_1617_FINAL_web.pdf)

progress on diversity (dubbed by ACE as ‘treading water’) is also reflected in Arts Council England’s own workforce.

## The View from Within

Based on a self-report survey of theatre workers at all levels, the SOLT Workforce Review<sup>11</sup> presents a depressing picture of a UK theatre sector which is complacent, exclusionary and resistant to change. Key findings include:

- There are skills shortages, particularly outside London, in a wide range of technical and craft skills.
- HR skills are not highly regarded; recruitment and management practice are outdated and inadequate.
- Theatre attracts ‘theatre types’: it is described as a closed shop and nepotistic, running on informal networks and patronage.
- You need wealth to gain entry into the sector (to support unpaid training etc.) and to sustain a career in it because wages are low for the majority, and workplace conditions are poor.
- There is a culture of working in theatre out of love, which creates an expectation of working long hours and putting up with antisocial working practices.
- Theatre operates a *de facto* hierarchy of prestige between ‘creative talent’ and everyone else; feelings of being undervalued are widespread.

## Inequalities of Class

Concerning ‘workforce diversity’, the Arts Council of England report *Analysis of Theatre in England* (BOP/Devlin 2016)<sup>12</sup> asserts that “there is very little data on the social class of people working in the theatre in England. However, the literature that does exist shows the difficulties that those from *non-middle-class backgrounds* face in accessing jobs in the sector, particularly acting” (p51).

---

<sup>11</sup> Nordicity and Smith. A. (2017) Workforce review of the UK offstage theatre and performing arts sector. Final report, *UK Theatre and Society of London Theatre SOLT*.

<https://solt.co.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allId=712808>

<sup>12</sup> BOP Consulting and Devlin, G. (2016) *Analysis of Theatre in England*. Arts Council England

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/theatreinengland>

The report cites a single study (Friedman et al, 2016)<sup>13</sup> into the disadvantages facing working class people seeking to enter the acting profession. Friedman et al note that research into discrimination based on social class has been overlooked in favour of other issues of inequality experienced by women and ethnic minorities and the precarious working conditions that exist throughout the other cultural and creative industries (CCIs).

Friedman et al suggest that the phenomenon of class discrimination provides a comprehensive framework of inequality involving difficulties entering the profession, gaining advancement and achieving pay parity with middle class colleagues. The authors argue that familiar discourses of 'glass ceiling' should also be reframed as the '*class ceiling*' which characterises the limiting of opportunity to certain (majority) groups within British society.

Widely accepted notions that the CCIs are meritocratic (e.g. Florida, 2002)<sup>14</sup> are challenged by critical perspectives that point to cultural work being precarious, unpaid or low-paid and exploitative (Friedman et al (2016); Crozier, 2018)<sup>15</sup>; These studies demonstrate how women and ethnic minorities are not only underrepresented in the cultural workforce, but are marginalised and paid less than their white, male colleagues (e.g. Oakley & O'Brien (2016)<sup>16</sup>; Creative Skillset 2011, 2012).

Substantiating the existence of social class discrimination, Oakley & O'Brien have demonstrated the existence of structural inequalities in certain sections of the CCIs, including "organisational issues, work patterns, hiring practices and... discriminatory pay gaps". For example, they show that individuals whose parents were from higher professional or managerial backgrounds earned on average £6,000 more than their colleagues with parents from less skilled occupations. Women are paid on average £5,800 less than similarly employed male counterparts. Thus, as Oakley & O'Brien suggest, women and those from working class backgrounds continue to struggle to compete with male colleagues and those from affluent backgrounds.

---

<sup>13</sup> Friedman S., O'Brien D. & Laurison, D. (2016). Like skydiving without a parachute': How class origin shapes occupational trajectories in British acting *British Journal of Sociology*, **51**, 992-1010.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0038038516629917>

<sup>14</sup> Florida, R. (2002). Cities and the creative class. *City & Community*, **2**, 3-19.

<https://creativeclass.com/rfcgdb/articles/4%20Cities%20and%20the%20Creative%20Class.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Crozier, G. (2018) Race and education: meritocracy as white middle class privilege. - *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, **39**, 1239-1246.

<sup>16</sup> Oakley, K. & O'Brien, D. (2016): Learning to labour unequally: understanding the relationship between cultural production, cultural consumption and inequality. *Social Identities*, **22**, 471-486.

<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/92581/>

The term ‘creative industries’ has been critiqued by Samdanis & Lee (2017)<sup>17</sup> as a means to promote the idea of creative employment as being an open and accessible career path to all sections of society alongside other mainstream ‘industry’ occupations. They point to the discourse of the self-employed cultural entrepreneur (the individual as an enterprise) as promoting freedom of expression and self-actualisation, which is a quintessentially neoliberal conception of 21st century work-life. Actually, life in certain sections of the CCI job market is typified by ‘job precarity’, low and erratic wages, and unregulated employment rights.

## Ideas of Meritocracy

Despite the weight of evidence showing that the arts workforce is sharply defined by social class and educational background, there appears to be a strong belief that the sector’s employment practices fairly reward talent, ambition and hard work regardless of other social factors including age, ethnicity, financial means and helpful social connections. O’Brien et al (2016)<sup>18</sup> and Taylor & O’Brien<sup>19</sup> observe that there is a pervading belief in meritocratic equality across the whole sector, although strikingly this is most strongly felt by those occupying the upper echelons. Those individuals who occupy the highest paid positions and are most influential in framing policy are also least open to the possibility that social factors (such as ethnicity, gender or social class) might constrain equality of opportunity in the arts for large sections of the general population. The study questions the idea that the arts world is open and accessible to all, being socially homogeneous and being sceptical about social exclusion. Accusations that the arts workforce displays worrying ‘echo chamber’ effects seem to warrant further investigation.

## Internships

Challenging the arts’ apparent meritocratic values, Samdanis & Lee argue that entry into the fiercely competitive arts sector is increasingly dependent on gaining unpaid internship employment which itself strengthens the stranglehold of class inequalities. In sections of the arts, publishing, music and museum sectors, they argue that internships are a basic requirement to access networks, contacts and experience - but that these crucially depend on families who are prepared to fund them. In this way, interns from higher

---

<sup>17</sup> Samdanis, M. & Lee, S.H. (2017). Access inequalities in the artistic labour market in the UK: A critical discourse analysis of precariousness, entrepreneurialism and voluntarism. *European Management Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emr.e.12154>

<sup>18</sup> O’Brien, D., Laurison, D., Miles, A. & Friedman, S (2016) Are the creative industries meritocratic? An analysis of the 2014 British Labour Force Survey. 116-131. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09548963.2016.117094>

<sup>19</sup> Taylor, M. & O’Brien, D. (2017) “Culture is a meritocracy”: Why creative workers’ attitudes may reinforce social inequality. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1360780417726732?journalCode=sroa>

socioeconomic backgrounds are privileged with prestigious job experience opportunities in London and the metropolitan areas which are unavailable to their working class peers.<sup>20</sup> The argument is backed up by research from the Prince's Trust<sup>21</sup> which found that young people from less well-off families are 50% less likely than the average to find work experience through their parents suitable to their needs. Thompson (2012)<sup>22</sup> asserts that the intern system works against class mobility: saddled with student debt, poorer young people “cluster in retail and food preparation jobs” while the middle classes avail themselves of opportunity-laden “posh unpaid internships” in the big cities. According to Perlin (2011)<sup>23</sup> ‘Internship injustice’ is clearly driven by race, class and gender differences. Shade & Jacobson (2015)<sup>24</sup> go further and suggest that internships are fuelling “precarious youth employment of college and university graduates, especially among young women aspiring to work in the creative sector”. On the gender dimension, Perlin claims that “women are more socialized in the customary ways of doing sacrificial work”, i.e. more “accepting of unpaid, unjust situations”.

In the UK, Cullinane & Montacute (2018)<sup>25</sup> have shown that about 40% of graduates have undertaken internships, with 70% of these having done so at least once on an unpaid basis. As expected, young people from middle class backgrounds are more likely to undertake unpaid internships than working class peers. The authors assert that internships “serve as a mechanism for maintaining class advantage”.

## Social Mobility

Lack of social diversity in the arts sector seem to reflect UK society as a whole where low and declining levels of social mobility are observed. Social mobility is understood to involve the availability of equal and fair opportunities to individuals irrespective of their parental background, enabling them to achieve their potential in terms of education, income and occupation. It is measured by comparing income, occupational status and educational achievement across generations. When an individual's income or status is not

---

<sup>20</sup> Oakley, K., Laurison, D. & O'Brien, D. (2017) Cultural Capital: Arts graduates, spatial inequality, and London's impact on cultural labor markets . *American Behavioral Scientist*, 61 (12), 1510-1531.

<sup>21</sup> [The social bank of mum and dad \(2016\) The Prince's Trust https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/news-views/social-bank-of-mum-dad](https://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about-the-trust/news-views/social-bank-of-mum-dad)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/05/work-is-work-why-free-internships-are-immoral/257130/>

<sup>23</sup> Perlin, R. (2011) *Intern Nation: How to Earn Nothing and Learn Little in the Brave New Economy*, <https://www.versobooks.com/books/1112-intern-nation>.

<sup>24</sup> Shade, L.R. & Jacobson, J. (2015) Hungry for the job: Gender, unpaid internships, and the creative industries, *Sociological Review*, 63, 188-205.

<sup>25</sup> Cullinane, C. & Montacute, R. (2018) Pay as you go? Internship pay, quality and access in the graduate jobs market. The Sutton Trust.

seen to be closely linked to that of the preceding parental generation, social mobility is high. High social mobility is correlated with increased productivity, possibly explained by more people who are working in jobs which are better matched to their abilities. In research by the Oxera Group (2017)<sup>26</sup>, it is observed that: “In a more socially mobile society, it is more likely that a job will be filled by someone with the highest level of potential to perform well in a job, rather than someone who may be less well suited but, for example, better connected.” The report estimates that the UK economy could grow by 2% (representing £39bn p.a.) were the UK to attain social mobility levels equivalent to those of other Western European countries. Other research suggests that the social mobility premium could be even greater, with a GDP boost of 4.4% (Machin & Elliot (2018)<sup>27</sup>).

Research by the Boston Consulting Group (2017)<sup>28</sup> shows that advances in social mobility (by income) between the 1940s and 1970s in the UK have gone into reverse since the 1980s. In contrast to France and Germany, which have recorded real increases in pay, the ‘millennials’ are the first post-war generation to have lower wages than their parents, with average annual declines of 1% between 2007 and 2015, one of the largest declines among the OECD countries. Alongside the US, the UK is among the lowest for income mobility among the developed world: for example, the OECD calculate that Denmark is three times more socially mobile than the UK. The effect is seen among students in identical academic positions, where according to HMRC records, those from poorer backgrounds go on to earn 10% less per annum than their more affluent peers.

The Boston study<sup>28</sup> argues that access to equal opportunity is determined by the availability of advantageous networks, information about opportunities, and low levels of discrimination such as that based on class and family wealth. The situation is not all bleak: at least there is a growing public awareness of society’s inbuilt inequalities. An IPSOS Mori survey (2017)<sup>29</sup> found that more people believed that opportunities for advancement in Britain are unequally distributed; unsurprisingly, young people and those from lower social grades were most pessimistic about positive social mobility.

Research also points to the phenomenon of ‘stickiness’ in which the poorest and richest tend to be the least mobile sections of society, a process which over time widens inequality in wealth, income and education.

---

<sup>26</sup> The Oxera Group (2017) *Social mobility and economic success: How social mobility boosts the economy*. The Sutton Trust.

<sup>27</sup> Major, L.E. & Machin, S. (2018) *Social mobility and its enemies*. Pelican Books.

<sup>28</sup> Boston Consulting Group (2017) *The state of social mobility in the UK*. Sutton Trust. Social Mobility Archives [https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/BCGSocial-Mobility-report-full-version\\_WEB\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/BCGSocial-Mobility-report-full-version_WEB_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Ipsos Mori (2017) *Social Mobility Survey*. Sutton Trust.

Educational mobility also seems to have declined in recent years. The disparities are stark, particularly in comparison with Britain's international competitors: a quarter of adults lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, consigning them to low-skilled, low wage labour, while people who went to private school earned 41% more than people from state schools<sup>24</sup>. Disadvantage arising from social class is entrenched in the education system, where university graduates who go on to earn 66% more than non-graduates are much more likely to be from middle-class backgrounds. In the Sutton Trust's recent research *Access to Advantage* (2018)<sup>30</sup>, it was found that eight elite schools and colleges send as many pupils to Oxford or Cambridge as the next 2,900 others put together (which represent three quarters of all secondary education providers). Children studying at independent schools are seven times more likely to go to Oxbridge than those at state schools. Meanwhile, comprehensive school pupils were much less likely to receive and accept an offer from a Russell Group university compared with those from independent schools (44% compared to 71%).

## Ethnicity

87% of people in the UK are White, and 13% belong to a Black, Asian, Mixed or Other ethnic group, according to the combined 2011 censuses for England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

Black people were more than three times as likely to be arrested than their white peers. A government commissioned report chaired by David Lammy MP (Uhrig (2014)) reported that BAME people are more likely to be imprisoned than white people. *The Guardian* reported that:

“Disproportional outcomes were particularly noticeable in certain categories of offences. For every 100 white women handed custodial sentences at crown courts for drug offences, the report found, 227 black women were sentenced to custody. For black men, the figure is 141 for every 100 white men.”<sup>31</sup>

Fewer than two-thirds of people from ethnic minorities are in work, compared with three-quarters of white people. While working age people with an Indian background are nearly as likely to have a job as white people, those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin are the least likely to be in employment.

Among poorer children who are eligible for free school meals, those from BAME backgrounds have higher attainment levels for reading, writing and maths than white

---

<sup>30</sup> Montacute, R. & Cullinane, C. (2018) *Access to advantage. The influence of schools and place on admissions to top universities.* Sutton Trust.

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/nov/16/ethnic-minorities-more-likely-to-be-jailed-for-some-crimes-report-finds>



pupils. By age 11, about half of those of Bangladeshi and Indian origin reached expected academic standards, compared with fewer than a third of white British children, who fared the worst of any group. Even so, children from BAME family backgrounds are less likely to work in professional jobs, according to a Social Mobility Commission report (2016)<sup>32</sup>.

Mental health issues are also of concern among people from BAME backgrounds, who are more likely to be diagnosed with mental health problems, more likely to be hospitalised, have poorer treatment outcomes, and are likelier to disengage with mental health support services. They tend to suffer less conservative, more coercive treatments (e.g. secure hospitalisation, more aggressive medication regimes, or sectioning)<sup>33</sup>.

---

<sup>32</sup> State of the Nation 2016: Social Mobility in Great Britain, *Social Mobility Commission* [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/569410/Social\\_Mobility\\_Commission\\_2016\\_REPORT\\_WEB\\_1\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/569410/Social_Mobility_Commission_2016_REPORT_WEB_1_.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Mental Health Foundation (2016) <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/fundamental-facts-about-mental-health-2016>

## Responses from partner organisations

This section contains detailed notes from interviews, meetings and conversations with those consulted.

### Clothworkers' Bursaries: partner organisations

#### LAMDA

(Grace Archibald, Development Manager, Student Scholarships & Bursaries and Bethany McDonald Shepherd)

LAMDA responded to The Clothworkers' Foundation's invitation as their full-time courses are very intensive and require students to study full-time; LAMDA intends to enable students to study full-time without the stress of accumulating debt. Working with The Clothworkers' Foundation would enable LAMDA to have three years (which is very unusual in the current context of funding for short-term projects) of guaranteed investment and involvement, and to be allowed to discover what difference they could make with the bursaries.

LAMDA's access and participation programme has resulted in a current intake of 20% from low-income or disadvantaged backgrounds, with an average bursary of £6k per annum for each of the three years. Their aim is to increase this to 1 in 3 students from a total cohort of 300. The government only supports student loans on accredited courses, making it difficult for some students to access LAMDA. Access to financial support is decided on the basis of the student's financial and social situation; representation (i.e. how many "different" people LAMDA needs); on the basis of need across the applicants; audition to assess talent; interview, reports and decisions to ensure money is matched to the different donors' requests by a committee comprising Head of Acting, Technical and the Principal, along with external board members. They recognise they need processes that are transparent, fair, backed up by facts and evidence and that consider the background of the successful applicants for the funding and scholarships.

LAMDA's USP is ensemble training, on people working together to produce great theatre rather than on the individual. The Bursary has enabled LAMDA to make progress in including more people, for example, Amelia Swinchen Rew, their first wheelchair-user student in Technical, will be one of the first Tech graduates with a disability. *"We are pleased that we thought out of the box, pointing out that there are many technical skills and roles that can be undertaken by people with disabilities, instead of always thinking that representation is onstage, out at the front."* They also acknowledged that having more diverse students in LAMDA helps to remove barriers.

They have learned much about how to enhance a bursary-holder's experience, potentially through a welfare department that looks after all students to *"make sure no one falls through gaps."*

The key outcome for LAMDA has been three years of stability, giving both LAMDA and the individual bursary-holders time to develop. The legacy will be at a personal and community level, as LAMDA's students continue to be more diverse and representative of society. The focus on the individual and the opportunity for individuals has been very important for the success of these bursaries. NYT, for example, has appreciated feeling part of a bigger group, with LAMDA, RADA and the regional theatres.

## RADA

(Sir Stephen Waley-Cohen, Chair of RADA and Elisa Murphy, Development Manager, Trusts and Foundations)

RADA intends its students to be “industry-ready” on graduation: this is best achieved by intensive, immersive, contained study. Students study for 45 hours a week and the structure of RADA courses stands out from others in that students are not allowed to give public performances until their final term; they rehearse and perform to their peers, with 7-8 full productions a year. Teachers are highly respected actors, forward thinking in their practice and development, making RADA an industry leader through its broad approach to understanding drama and focus on bringing forward the leaders of the future.

Access to Acting, RADA's wide access programme, is aimed at people with disabilities and on a low income; it is run in partnership with Birmingham Rep, Theatre Royal Stratford East and Cardiff. RADA offers workshops open to all to encourage people who might not have considered theatre as an option.

Bursaries are based on need, focusing on those who should have support because of their talent, and provide career stepping-stones through the programmes. RADA's intake is 200 students in total (under and post-graduate), drawn from 3,500 auditions a year and students are eligible for financial support from being accepted. There are currently 95 scholarships, almost 50% of the student body. Their post-graduate courses cannot be financed by student loans but are necessary for some to fulfil their potential and find work in the industry. Support is available to existing RADA students, is means tested and for those who have taken out the full student fee loan of £9,250 and are committed to undertaking some fundraising themselves.

*“It is unique and amazing to be able to say, yes, we can help you, to individual students, up to £12,000 a year. It has been brilliant to have five years of guaranteed funding, so we know we could support a number of students. Fantastic to have the luxury of time from a fund-raising point of view. It is very unusual to have five years of scholarship support.”*

Students are offered support based on need. RADA finds that diversifying the student body requires increased pastoral care and support: students are taking up counselling, student wellbeing and physiotherapy. RADA have found that these bursary holders are becoming facilitators – sharing their experiences and journeys with others, particularly in sessions at local and partner schools, as role models, *“They are showing children that they can do this, too”*. Technical students experience all areas of theatre to prepare them for tech-heavy future jobs and ensure they are work-ready and adaptable. This gives students great value for money and enables them to train for a wider range of skills.

85% of RADA graduates are in work, against the industry norm of 90% of actors “resting.” Intake each year: 28 Acting, 32 Tech, 60 in each undergraduate year.

*“The bursaries and support are good for RADA because it’s important for the continuation of creativity, having people of different backgrounds making the work. It sounds simplistic but it’s essential.”*

RADA finds the main challenge is the scale of need and that demand for support is becoming more widespread due to inequality in Britain. Sir Stephen Waley-Cohen, Chair of RADA, reflected on the growing and continuing need for bursaries. RADA has to fundraise, as living in London isn’t cheap. *“We select bursary holders on talent and potential to develop that talent: this should continue. They can’t get this education elsewhere because there are fewer regional producing theatres – repertory theatre no longer really exists: RADA is the only place you get that training.”* Sir Stephen believes that *“if you are passionate about theatre, you will make it through, but will need training, education and access to learning. Bursaries provide proper training for professional actors – to be consistent: understand how to use their bodies, manage themselves, sustain 7 performances a week for 2 months. They have technique; they are industry-ready, which means people can hire these graduates and know they will deliver.”*

## SOLT/UK Theatre

(Lee Menzies, Chair of the Olivier Bursaries Committee; Martin Scott, Chief Operating Officer; Catherine Bowell, Awards and Events Executive)

The discussion with SOLT focused on how bigger issues in the theatre industry are impacting on the talent pipeline and on the dearth of opportunities open to young people to enter the theatre industry. Despite the theatre industry’s substantial contribution to the UK economy the reduction in arts services and arts funding is a real cause for concern and unease over the state of the Theatre industry especially in the regions: SOLT has extensively and persistently lobbied for better funding but *“the doors are closed with this government.”* - making bursaries necessary. SOLT and UK Theatre find that access to drama schools is limited due to the fees and living costs related to studying which rule out many young people from entering the industry.

SOLT set up the Laurence Olivier Bursaries in 1987 to provide financial support to exceptional students entering their final year of drama school and facing financial difficulties which might impede their studies. SOLT regularly comes up against the issue of how money restricts options for young actors.

Lee Menzies commented that *“Young people are the life blood of the arts. We find that a lot of them have a first degree, but their location creates a geographical squeeze. The Bursaries get them through the final year, because performing and rehearsing gives them a chance to focus on their study. There are lots of dance and drama awards floating about but nothing else. When they are studying there is no time to be working as well. This is all about giving: if one of them goes to NY or LA, makes it big, they give it back to the exchequer, as well as giving it back to the arts and providing joy. We try to marry need to talent.”*

SOLT /UK Theatre selects 18 to 20 bursaries a year from 45 applicants, enabling a tight focus on who will derive maximum benefit. The partnership with The Foundation is to fund the annual Laurence Olivier Bursary. The bursaries are very prestigious, winners are judged by their peers and the best in the field. Making it part of the Olivier awards adds resonance. Lee contacts drama schools to ensure they know about it and will put forward their talented students. The bursaries have been broadened out to include backstage, responding to the need to develop the workforce of the future and initiatives to diversify the workforce. *“The theatre industry needs to find new entry points and learning processes for young people to gain experience and we can secure the next generation of actors and theatre-makers.”*

## National Youth Theatre

(Annie Niland, Associate Director; Richard Wilkinson, Head of Development; Angel Dahouk, Development Manager)

Clothworkers’ funding has been valuable to NYT because most trusts and foundations will only fund programmes rather than support individuals. *“When Clothworkers came to us and said we’d like to fund you it was an extraordinary experience for us because this offer was so in line with our objectives for social inclusion and young people.”* The funding enabled NYT to work with young people who would not otherwise go into the theatre. *“It challenged the issue that you have to be wealthy to go to drama school and enabled NYT to actively seek out talented young people and to offer them support - and this has opened up a new world for them”.*

NYT’s programmes expose young people to all aspects of theatre-making: for example, performers can become writers or stage technicians: students can develop skills to play to their strengths or find new strengths they didn’t know they had. NYT’s Playing Up programme is an OCN Level 3 accredited nine-month drama training programme, offering young people aged 19-24 not in Education, Employment or Training the opportunity to gain a Higher Education Diploma in Theatre Arts, the equivalent of 2 ‘A’ Levels. This is a special opportunity to work with a group of people who are NEET and for a writer to write for them to reflect their issues and concerns. It is the one-off opportunity that does not often happen in theatre and allows participants to develop a wide range of theatre skills. Many organisations are trying to work with NEETs and NYT is achieving this through its drama programme: this helps to open up new options for careers. NYT is helping young people to develop skills in working with socially excluded young people and to learn to value and celebrate each other and to address one of the major challenges that society faces.

Young people who want to study drama in London face the major cost of relocating; this is almost impossible without financial support. Taking loans is not an option for many young people and as NYT comments, *“more importantly we should not be promoting debt. The £5K bursary is life changing and helps to make a shift in their lives. It affects what they write about and their experiences. They are the kinds of people who are underrepresented in the industry. Many young people from working class backgrounds don’t get any exposure to possibilities. A key issue is the closure of local theatres and the demise of many outreach programmes, so theatre is simply not part of their culture.”*

NYT notes that very limited numbers of young people have GCSEs in drama or technical skills. The bursaries have been important in allowing young people to understand the range of occupations across the theatre industry and how backstage skills can open many employment options. The bursaries have been helpful in starting to change the creative industries diversity profile but the question facing NYT is “*how to make the ripples bigger.*”

NYT has 19 staff, a third are part-time, and its focus and funding is heavily directed to delivery. The downside of this is a lack of time and opportunity to reflect on future options for organisational direction. “*The industry is open to change but we need to ramp up our partnerships and spread our reach through organisational development. NYT wants to reach people who don’t even think about these kinds of careers, but we do not have the time or resource to go out across the country and find new generations of talent that we could be recruiting.*”

“*The bursaries are an opportunity to nudge the industry forward in increasing access and inclusion but the industry needs to find new ways to march forward so it can continue to be a change-maker and increase the ripples made by the bursaries.*”

## Responses from Regional Theatre Award recipients

### Theatre Royal Plymouth (TRP)

South West England, 2014

#### *Intention and purpose of grant*

Theatre Royal Plymouth feels that “*Plymouth is a very long way from anywhere else.*” Its location presents challenges and disadvantages in an industry which is so strongly focused on London.

The Theatre’s unique location means that it is difficult to get national critics to come to Plymouth to review their work as this requires a four-hour journey, thus precluding national critical recognition of their artistic productions. This results in two main impacts: it affects their national artistic profile and reputation in the theatre industry and only by gaining such national profile and wider recognition of its artistic success can the Theatre attract the level of audience required to render it financially and creatively sustainable. It operates in a challenging socio-geographic and demographic context, sited in a sparsely populated area that experiences high levels of economic decline and deprivation; low average income levels; poor transport links and a limited catchment area from which to draw audiences. TRP operates on one of the lowest subsidy levels of ACE funded regional theatres. The Theatre has a large auditorium, Studio and community space and presents a broad programme to serve the needs of a diverse population. It relies considerably on commercial and subsidised sector partnerships and presents large-scale touring productions, for example, Glyndebourne Touring and Royal Shakespeare Company. TRP

has co-producing relationships with many successful national and international producers and companies: these enable people in the South West of England to access high quality theatre and for the TRP to commission and develop new works. However, partners rather than TRP are often cited as the creative force for these projects which again limit the artistic recognition of TRP's efforts. London is the centre of the theatre industry – and TRPs profile in London needed a boost.

TRP looked to the Clothworkers' Theatre Award to take steps to increase its standing in the leading creative communities to help it attract leading theatre makers from across the UK to create work of the highest quality and to increase its producing capacity, both helping to ensure its viability. TRP sought Clothworkers' investment to transfer and showcase its productions in theatres in London, specifically hired for this purpose.

This project intended to gain national reviews, critical attention and acclaim for TRP productions, enhancing industry recognition of its artistic value: this would establish TRP as a national player and put the South West of England on the theatre map. TRP would then be able to attract talent and investment to develop its artistic product, leading to increased regional audiences and income and better deals with London theatres - enabling TRP to sustain a quality programme for people regionally. TRP felt it needed the sense of being a "creative equal" in conversations with other industry players - and to achieve this it was critical to be recognised in London, considered the centre of the theatre industry.

### *Achievements, outcomes and impacts*

TRP feels that the financial support has led to "a step change in our reputation" and has supported its objective to build greater critical recognition at national level - which in turn has supported its longer-term creative and economic sustainability. Essentially it has led to increased credibility in the theatre industry: *"taking shows to London shines a light on our work and our very existence. It helps us to keep on not being forgotten by the industry and its funders."*

### *Key outputs and outcomes*

Year 1 2015-6

#### **After Electra** by April de Angelis:

3½ week run at The Kiln marked a new relationship with The Kiln and its Artistic Director Indhu Rubasingham

Renegotiation of venue from hire status to partnership with The Kiln Theatre: gross sales of £65,970 with first call of £40k to TRP

Audience of 3,569

17 national critics (including The Guardian, FT, Daily Mail, BBC Radio4 and The Stage) attended the press night; press was aware this was a TRP production

Reviewers awarded the production three or four stars

Industry peers targeted during this run to attend press night

Development of longer-term strategy for cultivation of the talent of regional theatre-makers and new writing

TRP Board allocation of £750,000 from reserves to support the initiative

Production costs were lower than budgeted; but running in London and PR costs were higher than projected, as was box office income - resulting in a shortfall as projected.

### **Monster Raving Loony** by James Graham

3-year development phase of a politically and socially charged production. This new work marked an innovative approach for TRP in enabling it to meet its ambition of bringing the audience into the story and empowering them. Audiences were given props and disguises to recreate the look and feel of a working men's club. The production process involved specialist voice and music training for the cast, as stand-up comedy skills were integral to the performance.

3-week Plymouth run generated national media preview coverage and extensive social media presence which attracted new audiences

This was the highest grossing TRP solus production in the Drum, at 70% attendance (2103 tickets) and gross box office of £16,412

Realising artistic ambition is costly: although the new format was innovative and artistically ambitious, it resulted in a financial deficit of £10k, even with further input of £20k from TRP reserves

Transfer to London: TRP negotiated a five-week run at the Soho Theatre from mid-May 2016, on the basis of a 70/30 split for TRP

Tickets went on sale at a late stage, which impacted on marketing and thus on revenue.

Learning from strategic use of social media from the experience of *After Electra* and the social media potential of this show meant it was more effective.

A shortfall of £35K was projected, but due to running costs for the show in London; PR costs and cast changes, production costs were higher, and sales income was lower than projected, resulting in a shortfall of £67K.

2,710 tickets sold, with an income of £30,921, reaching 48% of capacity

The press night was attended by 20 reviewers, including Financial Times, The Sunday Times, The Guardian, The Observer, The Stage and the BBC: most reviewers awarded four stars to the production.

### *Overall lessons learned and observations*

The costs and difficulties incurred in transferring a show from a regional theatre to a London venue. Success depends on the venue's state-of-health, its reach to the target



audience profile and the profile and reputation it has. These factors should not be underestimated. Sourcing and hiring a suitable venue are costly and incurs a range of expenses; the logistical difficulties of simultaneously running a show at a location at some distance whilst running the home venue are stressful and time-consuming.

Presence in London builds credibility for TRP in the theatre industry but also garners recognition and kudos for the Theatre that helps to attract local and regional audiences and fosters a sense of local pride, notably from Plymouth City Council and Arts Council England.

Careful negotiation is required to position and present the TRP brand in a host venue.

Exposure to different and more diverse audiences in London - such as the regular theatregoers at Southwark Playhouse - has been a rewarding experience for the company. TRP comments that London theatre audiences have far more choice in the work they can see and as a result they are more culturally informed. TRP's Plymouth audience is very mixed, but very loyal.

The defining moment that summed up the value of the Clothworkers' Theatre Award was the London Press Launch at Soho Theatre of the TRP London season. Young playwright James Graham spoke about what the Award has meant to his career, to the people with whom he works, and to the theatre industry: attendees included producers and key industry players.

The Clothworkers' Theatre Award has enabled a step change for TRP: the financial cushion has enabled TRP to take risks to realise the artistic ambitions that they felt would make the greatest impact on the organisation. The Award enabled them to work with new writers to increase its reputation and thus its ability to attract talent on the basis that TRP works in London and beyond. In recognition of the need to lever in the level of financial support to achieve its artistic ambitions, TRP has since appointed a new Head of Development.

2017/18 plans included the development of co-producing partnerships to take work to London and Edinburgh to sustain TRP's reputation as a creative producer and to achieve its artistic ambition.

Sustainability: it would be difficult for TRP to sustain the transfer of productions to London without significant uplift in core funding for the development and transfer of the work. It is also difficult to see what direct benefits these transfers to London venues have brought to local TRP audiences, and the extent to which this investment by The Clothworkers' Foundation has served their interests.

## York Theatre Royal (YTR)

Yorkshire and Humberside, 2015

### *Intention and purpose of grant*

As a leading producing theatre, York Theatre Royal's vision is to be recognised as vital to its community, working within a secure and predictable environment with systematic leadership; empowered staff; a programme of work that matches the diverse needs of the local community, and a network of regional, national and international relationships. The Theatre is recognised for its innovative work with young people, particularly its TakeOver Festival; its commissioning of new productions, and for its approach to engaging communities in the co-creation of theatre-making.

The organisation faced the issue that the general quality of the Theatre environment was lagging behind its considerable artistic and community achievements and failing to meet audience expectations. ACE awarded £4.1m for capital works to render the Theatre fit-for-purpose by improving access and navigation; enhancing comfort levels in the auditorium; creating an animated face for the building that enhanced the visitor welcome; increasing the size of front-of-house, providing new artistic opportunities for communities, improving environmental performance and strengthening its presence in York's Cultural Quarter. The Theatre then closed for eight months to undertake these capital works, described as a "*pivotal moment in its history which will launch it into a flourishing future.*"

The Theatre is faced with ACE standstill funding and reducing local authority investment and looks to increase its earned and contributed income.

The Company looked to the Clothworkers' Theatre Award to enable a landmark project for the re-opening of the Theatre. Community Collaboration: a season of active spectatorship was intended to engage the community in unique participation in cultural processes, so they feel more connected to the Theatre as "active spectators" rather than passive observers of the city's cultural life. The project included a programming group to shape artistic programming; the TakeOver Festival for 2016-2018 produced by young people; a Youth Theatre cross-generational project and a community production of a play to be performed across York.

This project intended to reinforce the sense of belonging and community cohesion that creates social capital; to reduce the isolation experienced by many people through creating opportunities to interact with other people and different generations; to widen the opportunities for work experience in a range of creative industries for young people to alert them to new options for their futures, and to increase the confidence of project participants through coming together with others to create theatre work. The emphasis was to benefit hard-to-reach people who face social, cultural or financial barriers.

### *Achievements, outcomes and impacts*

The Clothworkers' Foundation Award enabled York Theatre Royal to:

- **build on its model of the Takeover Festivals** and to deliver these in 2016 and 2017: young people delivered a week-long programme in the newly refurbished Theatre. The programme theme centred on returning to one's roots, ideas of home in daily life and new beginnings.

A new work, Pandora by TakeOver's Artistic Director Lizzy Whyne, who was on work placement at YTR was commissioned. It was an opportunity for her to explore and share issues faced by young people: *"What I wanted to do is to say the "unsayable" and to speak of the unspoken things that aren't normally talked about in public, because if you don't discuss them, nothing will get fixed. Usually this sort of theatre would be staged in a studio or a bar, so it's great for us to be performing Pandora in the main house. This play has been a brave thing for me to do but I'm glad to have done it as I want it to be a really insightful piece, because everyone has bad things happen to them, but it's about how you can move on from there and function as a human being."* Lizzy benefited from working with two assistant directors, Matt Harper, former co-artistic director of Upstage Centre Youth Theatre and Roxanna Klimaszewska, from fellow York company Six Lips Theatre.

Young people were involved in programming and producing their own festival and had the opportunity to shadow theatre professionals and to see first-hand what their jobs entailed; to make decisions and learn about theatre - making. 50 young people volunteered to take on roles in senior management, front of house, backstage and marketing. Opportunities for engaging other young people were provided through the Festival's education and community programme.

- **Support disadvantaged young people through the drama group, Access All Areas:** 19 young people volunteered to support the Access all Area drama group at YTR, and worked with young people aged 12-16 who are disadvantaged and socially excluded or who are young carers. They worked with trained professionals to gain skills, confidence and self-esteem and to interact with peers in a supportive environment.
- **Support career development in the theatre industry:** TakeOver alerted young people to the many opportunities working in theatre offers: for example, Lizzy Whyne has since become an Education Officer at Harrogate Theatre; Charlotte Bennett, TakeOver 2017 Artistic Director, is now at Paine's Plough. Other TakeOver volunteers went on to work at Winchester Theatre Royal in admin and development; at Hall for Cornwall as a press and marketing assistant; in the production department at Young Vic; as a freelance programmer for Hull City of Culture; and one stayed on as outreach assistant and Youth Theatre mentor at York Theatre Royal. *"I am so delighted to be going on to a paid theatre role, thank you for being so supportive."*
- **Fund the new role of Creative Skills Promoter:** this post supported TakeOver and Access all areas, but further delivered new initiatives all of which shared the common aim of increasing opportunities for

participation in theatre activities by disadvantaged and troubled people. These included **Adult Access All Areas**: enabling adults with learning difficulties to explore theatre, to socialise and to learn new skills in a supportive setting. The **Kyra Women's Group Project** enabled women who had experienced traumas to work together on theatre and performance skills and to build confidence and self-esteem. The group were then involved in the 2017 YTR community project. The post enabled YTR to build on its relationship with **Danesgate Community Pupil referral unit** and to offer work experience to young people with limited opportunities. This post also led to a new relationship with York CVS and helped looked-after young people to raise their aspirations through new experiences and exposure to potentially engaging role models.

- **Commission a community production** of a new play by Bridget Foreman. *Everything Is Possible: The York Suffragettes* in collaboration with Pilot Theatre reflected York's role in theatre-making and in social history and explored the lives of women who led the fight for gender equality.
- Over 350 volunteers worked as cast, crew, press and administration.
- Develop community programming, the Visionari group: a new way to involve a diverse group of people in YTR, in aspects such as decision-making on YTR programming to shape its artistic work. The group learnt about all aspects of running a theatre, led by YTR staff. It also gave YTR a forum to test new ideas and new opportunities such as a new website.
- Intergenerational interaction: 40 YTR Youth Theatre members worked with 20 older people all over 65, on a new commission of a play, *Legacy*, by Paul Birch. The play explored topical issues of digital legacy and sense of identity. Youth Theatre Director Kate Veysey said: "This is the first intergenerational performance that we have created as a theatre. I am excited about the possibilities of two age groups working alongside each other to create this thriller for the stage. It's a play that is not afraid to question our blogging/vlogging/social media society where you can literally find out what a stranger had for their dinner, their political views, and even which cat videos they like."

Overall YTR felt it was vital that the Clothworkers' Theatre Award could support two years of the TakeOver Festival, as this valuable initiative would not otherwise have happened: there were no other funding sources to enable it to take place.

Regional theatres are reliant on Trusts and Foundations to support outreach; Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding supports YTR's core programme but does not extend to projects such as TakeOver.

YTR commented that the 2016 and 2017 TakeOver Festivals had themes that attracted more diverse young people and had opened opportunities to work with other diverse groups. *"Commissioning new work with different young people has changed the Theatres atmosphere and creates another dimension to our work. The Clothworkers' Theatre*

*Award allowed us to open up new areas and to build new relationships with diverse social groups in our community, rather than focusing on short-term one-off projects.”*

### *Key outputs and outcomes*

2016

- TakeOver 15 volunteer roles:
- Chair of Board and Board Members x 15
- SMT – Artistic Director, Associate Director, Producer, General Manager, Visitor Services Manager, Production Manager, Head of Communications and Marketing
- Officers – Youth Theatre Director, Education Associates x 2, Press and Media Officer, Marketing Officer, Digital Marketing Officer
- Volunteers x 30 – Front of House, Marketing, Backstage
- Access All Areas young general festival volunteers x 10

Total = 68 young people

Community groups YTR’s Creative Skills Promoter engaged with:

- Access All Areas adults x 10
- Kyra Women’s Project x 30
- Refugee Action York x 30 / All Four Corners x 75
- Bright Futures x 25
- Danesgate x 20
- York Young Carers x 8
- Applefields x 48
- Mill Lodge x 240
- The Island Project x 22

Total = 508 participants

Visionari (Programming Group) = 15 people

2017

TakeOver 16 volunteer roles were:

- Chair of Board and Board Members x 15 young people
- SMT x 8 roles
- Officers x 10 roles
- Volunteers x 24 - Front of House, Marketing, Backstage
- Access All Areas young general festival volunteers x 19

Total = 76 young people

Community groups YTR's Creative Skills Promoter engaged with:

Access All Areas = 50 (10 adults with disabilities; 10 as part of community production; 30 teens)

- Kyra Women's Project x 30
- Refugee Action York = 30
- Bright Futures x 25
- Applefields x 15
- Adult Mental Health Services x 20

Total = 170 participants

Visionari (programming group) = 15 people

*Everything Is Possible* by Bridget Foreman - Community Production

Performers x 135; Community volunteers x 350 (choir, photographers, musicians, wardrobe, production, front of house)

Total = 485 participants

*Legacy* by Paul Birch - Inter Generational Production

R&D session x 30; Production x 40 young people + x 20 older people

Total = 90 participants

Total number of people engaged throughout the project = 1,427

Percentage of those who were new audiences

The TakeOver teams and the majority of the Community groups we engaged with were new 'audiences. Estimated new audiences for the project = 80%.

Number of new opportunities for training and skills development and number of participants

All of the TakeOver roles were new opportunities for skills development and real work experience = 144

Adult Theatre Workshop = 16

Creative Writing Project = 4

Visionari = 15

Community groups = 678

Community Production = 485

There were additional roles that also had opportunities for skill development including Community Producer, Creative Skills Promoter and Assistant Director for Legacy, as well as skills development through the project for York Theatre Royal staff.

Number of new plays or new productions created through the project

Two - *Everything is Possible* by Bridget Foreman and *Legacy* by Paul Birch

Number of jobs/temporary posts created and how many were retained

Through the Clothworkers' Award we were able to support 3 roles – Creative Skills Promoter, Community Producer and Assistant Director for Legacy.

The Creative Skills Promoter role has become an essential role in our participation and engagement work. The job title has changed to Outreach Director and this post is now funded by the Patricia and Donald Shepherd Charitable Trust.

The Community Producer role has evolved into a Producer role. This too is now an essential role in the organisation.

The Assistant Director for Legacy was a project specific role.

**% of annual grant income for the year of the Award** YTR drew down £150,000 Clothworkers Award over 2 years:

2016-17

Clothworkers Award £ 72,600

ACE funding           £587,254

12%

2017-18

Clothworkers Award £ 77,400

ACE funding           £587,254

13%

Additional fundraising for *Everything is Possible* = £20,526

Community Producer (to make this into a full-time role) = £30,000

Did YTR undertaking this project result in any financial losses? No

Following our Community Collaboration: A Season of Active Spectatorship we have been able to continue to grow and develop our work and practice in our community. Examples included:

- Two new permanent key roles in the organization – Outreach Director and Producer
- A follow up main house Youth Theatre with associated groups of young people production, *Hetty Feather* in 2019
- Continuing partnerships with most of the community groups we collaborated with during this project
- Continuation of the Visionari programming group

## Northern Stage Young Company

North East England, 2016

### *Intention and purpose of grant*

Northern Stage, as the North East's major producing company, plays a strong role in developing the region's theatre ecology, as a maker and presenter of work and as a nurturer of talent. Its Young Company works with young people aged 16-21 living in areas of economic disadvantage in Newcastle and Gateshead. Northern Stage is committed to broadening its audiences by increasing the number of productions, co-productions and residencies so it presents a more diverse programme of work. The company is also committed to developing its talent pool through creating new opportunities for theatre-makers and artists and for sharing practice. Northern Stage's Talent Development Programme has led to the recognition of the company as a centre of excellence for the training and support of theatre artists, with clear entry points for early career artists to established producers of ambitious work.

Northern Stage is feeling the impact of standstill funding and the decline of local authority funding for culture: to mitigate this, the company is reviewing its programming, so that revenue from productions with popular appeal offsets innovation and artistic risk and reliance on public funding is reduced.



The Company looked to the Clothworkers' Theatre Award to enable a step change in its work with vulnerable young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who would otherwise be denied access to opportunities to reach their potential: "*to develop their voices and to empower them to make those voices heard*". Young people were to be actively involved in shaping the portfolio of intended activities to include free skills workshops; public performance workshops; a leadership programme; work experience opportunities across theatre disciplines and short projects delivered with community organisations to increase awareness of the opportunities opened up through the Young Company.

This project intended to raise the aspirations of young disadvantaged people who have little access to drama and creative opportunities in schools, little opportunity to engage with creativity in a social context and less opportunity to make a career in the arts than their more affluent peers. For Northern Stage it was intended to broaden its base of participants and forge deeper connections in areas of deprivation leading to new individual opportunities and the creation of work more relevant and representative of diverse audiences. It was further intended to increase the Company's profile in its home-base and develop relationships with Higher Education institutions.

### *Achievements, outcomes and impacts*

Clothworkers' Theatre Award has enabled Northern Stage to:

**Build capacity** through taking on the additional posts for the Young Company, an Associate Director, Louie Ingham, and an Administrator. Young people were involved in the recruitment process.

**Commission a longitudinal research project**, with Newcastle University's Institute for Creative Arts Practice, with an opportunity for an early career researcher as well as the involvement of a Young Company representative who will learn new skills. This will yield learning on the impact of the diversity of the Young Company programme

**60 young people**, aged 15-21, participated in a large-scale performance project of North East writer David Almond's *A Song for Ella Grey*. Young people with limited opportunity for creative activity were recruited and activities were provided in familiar venues close to home in their local communities, to reduce any barriers to access. 10 participants took part in all four weeks of the project, showing their commitment to engaging with the project.

**Set up the Young Company: Ensemble**, with 23 of the young people who took part in Ella Grey, and who are vulnerable, or have a disability. Northern Stage supports their needs. A team of artists supports, develops and challenges the young people to help them to grow as theatre-makers. *Where Do We Stand?* the show they have created, looks at Newcastle through the eyes of Generation Z - the untold stories of being young in the city and their experiences of place. The show was presented at the Festival of European Youth Theatre in 2018.

**Set up the Young Company: The Collective**, for 14 young people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, LGBTQ+ and six people from the Syrian Refugee settlement. They are creating work in response to the themes of *Where Do We Stand?*

**Young Company: Makers and Creatives** enabled young people to understand more about theatre - making from the production side, designing, budgeting, set construction, lighting and stage management and offered a different experience from the performance side of theatre.

**Bringing benefits to young people:** including increased confidence to speak out; understanding the value of arts projects; increased technical, performance and personal skills and increase understanding of teamwork and collaboration.

**Establish new relationships** with other North East organisations that run young people's programmes, including Custom's House, South Shields; Mortal Fools in Prudhoe; The Arches, Gateshead; Dynamix, Felling and Gateshead Studios. Further relationships were forged with schools and colleges, including an academy for young people with learning difficulties.

**New opportunities for young people to experience theatre**, including subsidised tickets to see theatre shows, to meet artists, and to work with young people in other theatre groups. A group of 12 young people from schools and colleges have been given opportunities to see work and take part in workshops.

### *Overall*

686 young people have been involved in Young Company sessions; 39% needed bursaries to attend; 31% are not in education; they value "*sharing your passion with so many diverse people*", "*freedom to be yourself*", "*a place to be you*"

Kate Denby of Northern Stage points out "that the Clothworkers' Theatre Award led me to rethink the role of a regional theatre and the dialogue it can have with its community and the value it can bring." 30% of Newcastle's young people live in poverty and this limits their access to opportunities. "Doors are not opened for them; they are not even shown the doors that are there. Young people are so often marginalised and accused. The Clothworkers' Theatre Award enabled opportunities for disadvantaged young people to be expanded and to open those doors by giving them training and experiences that allow them to compete with their wealthier peers and to give them agency to present themselves."

The Clothworkers' investment has enabled Northern Stage to make its ambitions for young people a reality: to set up new partnerships and programmes for participation by young people and to embed the role of the Young Company into the work of Northern Stage and the local community. Plans are in place for digital and technical theatre projects.

Northern Stage as an organisation has learned a great deal about young people through this process and how it has created value. Such learning has led to new ways of thinking about the experiences they offer young people and new ways of working and interacting

with young people and responding to their needs. Actions include recognising that young people need programmes that provide a diverse range of activities that respond to their interests; more dialogue across Northern Stage on how all departments can feed into growing the Young Company demonstrating young people are at the heart of Northern Stage. The company has now doubled its bursary placements, on the basis that young people need financial support to get involved. The Company also recognised that many community groups need spaces to meet and now offers such groups their spaces free of charge and find this brings them into contact with more young people. More activity now takes place at Northern Stage, so the Company invested in new resources and equipment. It is also piloting programmes for young people who may be NEET or at risk of exclusion.

Over two years the Clothworkers' Theatre Award has enabled Northern Stage to create coherent, impactful and high quality opportunities and experiences for disadvantaged young people: this has had considerable impact on the Company, The grant of £150k was a significant amount for the Company, accounting for one-third of its annual turnover. The Award is helping Northern Stage to lever further funding, for example from the Ballinger Charitable Trust. The increased use of the building as a community space has raised its profile locally, demystified "what goes on in there" and encourages more people to feel a sense of ownership and pride in the location.

## Derby Theatre (DT)

Midlands, 2017

### *Intention and purpose of grant*

Derby Theatre intends to carve out a unique role by demonstrating how a theatre can adopt new roles and responsibilities towards its community. Its re-imagining of the possibilities of regional theatre is rooted in being a learning theatre with a transformational artist development programme: its ambition is to nurture the next generation of theatre-makers through professional development. Its strategy to achieve this is delivered through goals that include industry leadership in achieving excellence; escalating talent to support participants to achieve their potential; unlocking potential for knowledge sharing on theatre re practice; to find new routes for the community to access theatre by targeting diverse audiences and supporting diverse artists, and increasing organisational resilience and the confidence to take artistic risk. The transition from Derby Playhouse, a regional repertory theatre, to Derby Theatre as a Learning Theatre Model was enabled by the intervention of the University of Derby. The Theatre is now generating a financial surplus but faces the issue of standstill funding and increasing costs: balancing artistic and financial considerations is an ongoing challenge in the current financial climate.

The Company looked to the Clothworkers' Theatre Award to enable it to fuse its strengths in community participation and learning with its creation of acclaimed theatre. It was intended to deliver its ambition to take theatre to communities in deprived areas who may never have seen its work. The Theatre aimed to co-produce a production with hard-to-reach communities in their own neighbourhoods, working side-by-side with

theatre professionals. Derby staff have been trained to disseminate many aspects of theatre practice and DT has created many routes through which people can learn skills. This project built on community touring projects by broadening and deepening community engagement and included resources such as a community teams in tech, sound design, marketing and *Theatre Unwrapped*, which reveals production processes to audiences.

This project intended overall to broaden horizons and raise aspirations for individuals and families and to respond to the need to develop the diversity of art attenders. Specifically, it looked to address the need for quality theatre for deaf people; for more creative work for family audiences; more community integration into theatre productions; to increase access to quality arts experiences for people from socio economically challenged backgrounds; to increase pathways into the theatre industry for socio-economically challenged participants; to address the lack of support for female voices on the stage and in creative and leadership roles in the arts and to address the needs of Derby's young people, including those being home-schooled.

### *Achievements, outcomes and impacts*

Delivery of the project has focused on two strands: *Our Place*, which invited the communities DT wanted to connect with into the Theatre; and *Your Place*, which took the Theatre out into those communities.

*Our Place*: the Clothworkers' Theatre Award application was to develop a large-scale production for families featuring professional actors working alongside community members. The work put forward was a new adaptation of Philip Pullman's *Clockwork*, due to its place-specific relevance to Derby's history of engineering and clockmaking. When the Theatre checked, the rights for this were not available, so instead, the Theatre decided upon a production of Kipling's *Jungle Book*, directed by Sarah Brigham, in April 2019. Although the rationale for this choice is not clear, it is familiar to many people.

DT's objective to create opportunities for deaf people was delivered through the inclusion of 3 deaf actors in the professional cast; a deaf Associate Director and a deaf Creative Associate.

The objective for community engagement was achieved: in response to targeted recruitment by the Theatre's community engagement team, 73 people, aged from 8 to 60, were auditioned: all were new to the Theatre, all had different reasons for wanting to participate, from wanting to be part of something, to do something they could be proud of. All were given roles in the production, as performers or backstage. 150 members of the community had a role in its production: performers were given two weeks of training to build skills and confidence in performance; a team of community members worked with the backstage team on prop-making and technical production. Looked-after young people from the Theatre's Plus One scheme worked on front-of-house, and 10 took part in an intensive programme on *Jungle Book* themes. All these opportunities exposed participants to understand more about the different aspects involved in mounting a theatre show. Participants were also invited to shows at the Theatre, so they became familiar with the environment.

*Your Place* was intended to build relationships with target communities and to develop new work which related to a non-theatre going audience. Working with community representatives enabled the Theatre to understand the issues that mattered to those communities – loneliness, social and geographical isolation, teenage crime - and these issues were then explored in the three productions. These toured to venues in some of the most deprived and struggling areas of Derby, including the Community Centre and Social Club at Sinfin, Osmaston Working Men’s Social Club and Miners Welfare at Ripley and Pixton. These were selected as trusted local community spaces where local people socialise, thus removing the barrier of crossing the threshold of unfamiliar places such as theatres. The shows also enabled these venues to provide an additional benefit to their local community – their regular programmes include quizzes and wrestling. The Clothworkers’ Theatre Award enabled Derby Theatre to present shows that addressed issues and challenged perceptions - and, importantly to take an artistic risk, so a “*fun night out at the local pub took on a new dimension and opened up conversations*”.

*Joan* (with Milk Productions, asks questions about identity and transgender); *Cinderella* (6 performances by Not Too Tame of an adult version that addressed issues of mental health); and *Goldilocks* (4 performances, co-produced with Hiccup Theatre) was co-curated with community leaders. Clothworkers’ funding enabled DT to run a £5 ticket deal and to invite people from Sinfin and Abbey to receive free tickets and transport to come to see productions of *Hansel and Gretel*. A positive response from audiences (“*Coming again tomorrow and bringing my mates*”; “*I have had so many interesting conversations with my two boys about gender stereotyping, gender expression and gender identity following the show*”).

Performances were captioned and BSL interpreted. For some audience members English is not their first language. Shows were used as a platform to inform other community partners about the scheme and 7 new Community Ambassadors have signed up.

### *Overall*

Derby Theatre aims to be an industry leader in community engagement: this project has built its organisational understanding about viable models for creating work that can be taken out to communities. It has enhanced their understanding of creating working relationships within communities through Ambassadors; of ways to communicate and engage with diverse and grassroots audiences; and of working with people who are trusted gatekeepers to communities in disadvantaged areas and who are prepared to take a risk by presenting a different kind of experience in their spaces - and of making first-hand experience of theatre available on the doorsteps of people who have limited access to culture.

The Clothworkers’ funding to support the production of *The Jungle Book* has extended the reach of the Theatre with the range of people DT engages with through an on-street recruitment drive by the Community Ambassadors. They recognise that the project has resulted in valuable organisational learning and that future projects with deaf participants will require the creation of experiences conducive to depth of engagement rather than focusing on the number of people involved.

The Theatre is now considering the sustainability of these two models of working because it has made a significant difference to their thinking about their role in developing best practice as a regional theatre in an area of deprivation. “*How can we make this a normal and not a “different” way of working.*” (Daniel Poole, Head of Development). The Theatre is exploring other funding sources and other opportunities to maintain longer-term and deeper relationships with people and communities that have been established through the project.

## Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch (QTH)

East of England, 2018

### *Intention and purpose of grant*

Queen’s Theatre Hornchurch (QTH) acts as a cultural hub for Essex and areas across Outer East London that take in Havering and Barking and Dagenham. The Theatre’s ambitions are to be at the heart of its local community; to change the way the theatre’s programming responds to the narratives of that community and to connect and engage with different people in different ways. Theatre infrastructure is weak in South Essex. The Theatre believes it is important to nurture local talent, to meet local and national needs. It also aims to be a beacon of best practice in all aspects of its operation.

In 2017-18 the Theatre began the process of realising these ambitions through new productions and a new team. Despite many successes the Theatre found that whilst implementing these new directions led to a 40% increase in people reached; a 58% increase in participation, and a 27% increase in audiences for British Asian work – it also led to a financial deficit. This situation is being resolved but the wider issue is that the Theatre suffers from a lack of investment and lower than average Arts Council England NPO funding.

The Theatre looked to the Clothworkers’ Theatre Award to fund its artistically ambitious “Essex on Stage”. This two-year project sets out to champion new perceptions of Essex as a cultural place through celebrating theatre made by working-class Essex artists – an ambition which reflects that class is a significant barrier to progress in the arts.<sup>34</sup> Essex on Stage sought Clothworkers’ funding for four new productions that would reconsider ideas of Essex as a place, alongside projects and opportunities that would bring new opportunities to audiences and to different groups of people in four Essex towns – a programme well beyond the scale of its current operation. Narratives of working-class life are a strong strand of the North East’s culture but are stories yet to be told in places such as Harlow, which has one of the lowest levels of engagement in culture. As places

---

<sup>34</sup> see Warwick Commission Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth, University of Warwick, 2015

like this experience rapid change, stories and narratives of its communities are eroded and lost.

Essex on Stage intended to address negative and stereotypical perceptions of Essex; to increase opportunities for working class artists<sup>35</sup> who have low aspirations; to be relevant and to resonate with the local community by celebrating working-class narratives on stage; to target areas of low engagement and to introduce first-time arts experiences to Looked After Children.

### *Achievements, outcomes and impacts*

Queen's Theatre used the Clothworkers' Theatre Award to develop opportunities to develop the creativity and talents of working-class artists. Theatre opportunities are scarce in South Essex and although the Theatre is based in London, it focuses its work on Essex in order to support and retain talented new writing.

Productions in this ambitious new two-year programme have included the regional premiere of Romford playwright David Eldridge's *In Basildon*, brought back to its roots after the 2012 premiere at the Royal Court Theatre, the stories and changing work of an Essex family. The production was commended by *The Stage* for "*its strong sense of place... a patchwork of local references.*"<sup>36</sup> Through an open call, the show provided opportunities for a cast of 10 "self-described" working-class local actors, who faced barriers through education, low self-esteem and class, and who didn't feel "brave enough" to audition in London. *In Basildon* achieved 67% box office. It attracted a diverse audience that included British Asian people, 35% of whom were new and within ACE protected characteristics and generated a high volume of social media. The Theatre was very encouraged that four Clothworkers' Foundation Trustees had attended the show.

A day of play readings by Essex playwrights drew an audience of 200, well in excess of expected numbers.

*"Essex lacks the infrastructure to develop talent and this Essex on Stage project marked a step-change in opening up possibilities for talent development."*

The Clothworkers' Theatre Award of £150k was a substantial and welcome investment to this regional producing theatre that is one of the least subsidised, that operates in an area of deprivation, and achieves a and considerable output on its core funding of £275. This funding was directed to particular strand of artistic programming, "*a magic moment, a turning point that helps us to deliver our ambition*" (Mathew Russell).

---

<sup>35</sup> Panic! Social class, Taste and Inequalities in the Creative Industries, Universities of Edinburgh and Sheffield, Arts and Humanities Research Council 2018

<sup>36</sup> [www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2019/basildon-review-queens-theatre-hornchurch-strong-performances/](http://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2019/basildon-review-queens-theatre-hornchurch-strong-performances/)

Queen's Theatre is confident that the boost given by the Clothworkers' Theatre Award to its artistic programme will positively affect its ability to lever subsidy for artistic product. The next stage of this project is to develop Essex-themed and based work and to connect with other Essex venues, in Southend, Thurrock and Harlow in order to build a community of theatres that ACE does not pro-actively engage with. *"The biggest challenge is finding people to make this happen we have the funds to subsidise the product and if these venues connect with us, it will be game-changing for Essex."* This chimes with the point made in the introduction to this section on the difficulties facing producing theatres as well as the issues of taking risks with new product.



# BAME representation and engagement within drama schools in the UK

Josephine Melville

## Introduction

This report looks at the lack of diversity progress, and at programmes and institutions that have sought to address inequalities and barriers preventing young people from disadvantaged BAME backgrounds from pursuing creative careers by attending drama schools in the UK. It also touches on how much is being done to effect change and redress the imbalance of diversity within drama schools and in the creative landscape in general.

I have spoken to a cross-section of young people who were either just applying to get into drama school or already studying, and some students who were in their final year and about to take the next step of beginning their career in the arts.

I have also spoken to seasoned Black actors who feel more could still be done to encourage the next generation of BAME creative performers and artists into the profession.

The interviews are not all pleasant reading. When broaching the topic of Black people in the arts, it can become a platform to air feelings the interviewee may have forgotten and stir resentment (either obvious or subliminal) of how some of the establishment treats people of colour.

When prospective students are told by teachers, “This might not be the profession for you, because you realise they only let two Black people in a year and that’s if you’re lucky” they can be left with a feeling of being defeated before they even start.

But there is hope. Although some are lost along the way, there are those actors who are determined not to be told “no”. Who have a dream and a vision of becoming the next Idris Elba, Letitia Wright, Chewital Ejifor, Sophie Okonedo, Rudolph Walker, Naomie Harris, or Thandi Newton. On a positive note, the list is getting bigger.

If you had asked the general public and even younger actors 10 years ago to name a Black actor who is a household name and has international status, you would be hard pushed to get answers. More often than not you would be given names of Black American actors, rather than Black actors in this country. However, we must take heart. The landscape is changing. But there is still much work to do.

Quite simply, there are very few people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds working in positions of power in the arts to effect change in this country. The industry needs to do a better job of reflecting the society it serves. Change is

undeniably required, and for the good talk to be turned into good deeds. We need people in positions of power and influence to show they genuinely care about this issue.

Diversity needs to start with the hiring process. All-white auditioning panels, and all-white hiring panels, will not drive change. Research tells us we recruit in our image of ourselves, so this undoubtedly skews the process.

Diversity within drama schools can be generously described as tokenistic, and this failure has adversely affected many young Black people seeking to go into the arts. The lack of minority ethnic representation in decision-making roles within drama schools also affects what is seen to be able to be achieved.

## The interviews

Interviewees gave their full names, but are referred to by first name only here. All opinions stated below are those of the interviewees.

### Tyne

Tyne has just finished a drama and applied theatre course at the University of East London and is looking at doing a postgraduate Masters course at Mount View.

When I asked if she had considered any other drama schools, she told me she was not a fan of the other places. Tyne did not like Guildhall, and hated LAMDA. After two auditions at both places, she got through to the final auditions and didn't like them. She had changed her mind about wanting to go there, as they only seemed to take one type of person and they felt like very pretentious places.

At LAMDA they only took one Black person per year, and she did not want to be given a place because she was Black. She did not want to fill their quota and be the token Black person.

Now she has finished her course she feels nervous about what the future holds and whether she will be able to get work, so she may do a further year of study.

She repeated her mantra: it is all going to be about who you know in the business.

At the time of writing Tyne has just been informed that her application has been accepted and she will be starting her master's at Mount View in September 2019. However, funding becomes an issue because it will be a postgraduate course. She will only get £10,000 of her fees paid for, and then she will have to pay the £5,000 balance. Neither she nor her single mother can afford this. The happiness, and then the hurdles.

*The interviewees agree that having attended one of a list of London drama schools subjectively regarded as the best will double and perhaps even quadruple your chances of getting into the audition room once you start looking for real acting jobs.*

## Grace

Grace was originally from Milton Keynes and is now based in Southend. She was a Musical Theatre Student at E15.

She grew up with her grandma, who has always been very supportive about her choice of career in the arts – this is rare in black families.

Grace is in her first year and came to E15 to study Acting and Dance. After starting she soon realised this was not the path she wanted to go down, and changed course to Musical Theory, which she felt played more to her strengths. Wanting a different repertoire, Grace is now studying World Performance. Her plan once she finishes the course is to go on to a career in musical theatre.

E15 were positive and accepting, and assisted her with her course transition.

Grace had done her research and found that she liked the course that E15 were offering more than the other drama/music establishments. She had applied to RADA and LAMDA, getting down to the final auditions in both, but had not been accepted at either.

Grace mentioned Drama UK, an umbrella for the big names in drama schools, but feels they need to be open to more diverse backgrounds. They could do better if they change their ethos. There are lots of talented Black people out there, but once you overcome the hurdles, persevere and get in, you are very aware that you are one of maybe two Black people in a large group of white people.

A recent newspaper article had stated E15 were ahead of the game, leading a very diverse contingent of students. Grace had been offended by the statements made. She noted that actually, the year before her only had one Black person in the entire year group. How was this leading the pack? She felt she was lucky having three other Black people in her year group, out of 40 students.

Education still a key factor in trying to make a difference in the sector. Grace was not really informed about the Arts as a career when she was younger. However, she was always passionate about performing and was lucky enough to have a grandmother who supported her all the way and helped her in realising her dream. She understands this is not the norm, as most families want their children to go on to have a financially viable career and do not feel this will come from the arts.

Some families from BAME backgrounds don't appreciate their children being creative. The parents feel they must be encouraged and persuaded, and that one needs to become a lawyer, doctor or civil servant in order to have a financially viable career. Having the support from family is very important for your mind-set while on your journey in the arts, but resistance from Black families is another hurdle. Parents want the best for their children and know that the arts will not be an easy path for them.

It is most definitely tougher to be Black at drama school than it is to be white. You are very aware you are Black with a group of white people. They could and should do better. Even trying to get in can be an emotional nightmare. It is tough to be able to pay for all

the auditions before you even get yourself in, and then tough doing the 3-year course and leaving with the student loan debt.

Drama in the UK could do better to change the ethos. The media constantly say that the arts are very diverse, but this isn't the case.

*Most casting directors will prefer to look at someone with a degree from e.g. RADA rather than from Hull College, even if the 3-year programmes are stated to be identical.*

## Ben

Ben is an actor with 50 years in the industry. His daughter is in the props and technical side of the film world.

In the 1970s and 1980s it was rare to see Black people on TV. When Ben saw Derek Griffiths in *Play School*, he decided that this is what he wanted to do. You have to do it, because you are creating examples that the young can aspire to and resonate with, and imagine themselves in those positions. We need more examples – we are not breaking barriers.

Ben went to Rose Bruford and achieved a teaching diploma. He is now on Rose Bruford's Equality Committee.

Ben was clear in stating that more needs to be done for children in school, who need to be made more aware about acting careers. However, there is the cultural mind-set and the trouble convincing Black people that acting is a viable career. It's also about what you see, and young Black people don't see us in management positions in the arts. How many Black directors are out there? How many drama tutors are black? The institutions are white domains – it does not feel like it could be home, for something that is going to entail enormous financial debt.

Paying to audition is a major factor in alienating lower income families from the BAME communities.

When asked what drama schools came to mind, Ben mentioned in order:

Central, Guildhall, RADA, Webber Douglas, LAMDA.

Before college, Theatre Centre (Roy Williams is a Patron) encourages people with diverse backgrounds to go into the arts. Talawa Theatre Company is an organisation that is helping to nurture and produce technical and creative black talent. Otherwise it is very bleak out there.

The action of not supporting diversity within the arts is subliminal; you can't slap anybody's face, because you don't know if they're abusing you or not!

Ben believes there are 6-8 Black companies left, but that the bubble has dissipated. The attractiveness of such companies has withered away. He still performs, but spends a lot of his time as a freelance director. Directing at Italia Conti, of the 16 students that he is working with, there are only 3 Black students - two mixed race and one West Indian. The

latter is from an upper middle-class background. If you are not working class, you are OK, and the access is forthcoming; the working class just “keep getting shat on” and don’t have much of a chance.

At one point Talawa Theatre Company were given a £15m capital grant investment to build the first dedicated Black Theatre in Victoria. However, when things didn’t go to plan the money was removed and redirected to other organisations.

Ben remembers it had been reported at some point that Central drama school had a 50% BAME count. He wonders, what did they do to achieve that, and is it still the case? Whatever they did, their model needs to be replicated elsewhere.

We need to bang on the door and giving a voice for as-yet unheard and unseen people.

*The Federation of Drama Schools states that they are always seeking ways to connect with young, diverse talent who might otherwise not have access to conservatoire training and to forge partnerships with organisations anywhere in the UK and beyond.*

## Ayesha

Ayesha is 38, of Dominican heritage, and based in East London. She went to Sylvia Young and Manchester University

The first close-up impressions she had led her to believe that if you wanted to be an actor you had to be loud, big, confident and showy to go to drama school. She thought it was going to be like Fame, and if it’s not like that then she didn’t want to go.

Her private drama teacher, Bill, taught her what she needed to know. Her mother was very supportive and encouraged Ayesha through her auditions. Ayesha became a child actor and spent three years learning the craft on the job at a very early age.

Unless you went to drama school, what theatre would take you seriously?

Having a drama school background gets you on the lists; you suddenly find you are in the clique. You won’t have to wait 10 years before getting the opportunity to work at the National Theatre.

The drama schools Ayesha was aware of included RADA, Central, LAMDA, Guildhall, Mount View, Rose Bruford and Laban.

When she was starting out, she did not want to go near the RSC. She wanted to burn the place down! She had heard too many bad stories. It conjures up a lot of bad feelings for people of colour and is not a safe place for Black actors.

RADA was seen as the Oxbridge of Drama schools and was a brand the BBC etc. could align themselves with, making it easier to be accepted.

Ronke Adekoluejo, Tanya Moody, Adrian Lester and David Harewood went to RADA, but you do not see or hear about many black people among their alumni.

Going to somewhere like RADA gives you class. RADA don't feel they have to court young black people. They are used to people coming to them. The impression is they are only courting middle class white people; they are not making the effort to encourage black people to audition.

Like all the drama schools, you have to pay to audition - between £40-50. It's a business. They are making money off the students before they are even in the drama schools. Ayesha feels there should be a rethink on the charges. Why couldn't they refund the charges if the applicant is unsuccessful? If I can't afford the audition and if I get in, I am going to struggle to survive the three years of training.

Drama schools could do more to encourage students from a young age in schools. There should be more done for young people to create that awareness about careers in the creative industries. If they really cared, they would.

There should be an increased intake of BAMER students in drama schools. It is a very closed shop. Vulnerable young people who want to get into the business have their hopes and desires dashed.

The drama school process of breaking you down to build you back up again, which is supposed to help to create the artist in you, is a problem. There were very few students or tutors that looked like me or understood me. The idea is that you break me down so I can learn how to be myself. How can you teach me to be myself when you don't know who I am, my history, my culture, my background?

Younger actors will strip themselves down and do whatever they are asked in the hope this is what is going to make them a great actor and to hell with the consequences. They come out like a Barbie in a box from drama school – they fit a certain shape and then hope to eventually have great careers.

The landscape is very exciting. More charities are helping people get into drama school. Changing the narrative of the landscape is imperative

Black actors are not comfortable touring the country. There is shock on people's faces when they see you're Black. There are unsafe spaces around the country.

Productions such those with as all-Black casts for Shakespeare don't threaten the status quo, and pander to all the worst types of 'tolerating' multicultural arts. It in no way challenges or encourages the audience to have an overview.

The *Black Panther* film opened a door for Black actors, hopefully re-energising the drive for more Black people to get into the industry.

While researching she came across the Acting in London website, which stated:

#### *5 BEST DRAMA SCHOOLS IN LONDON*

*Guildhall School of Music and Drama*

*Royal Academy of Dramatic Art*

*London Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts*

*Central School of Speech and Drama  
Drama Centre London*

However, when mentioning their alumni, they failed to reference one person of colour that came out of any of these institutions.

## Russeni

Doing drama in the Youth Theatre at Theatre Royal Stratford East was the start of Russeni's journey. Based in Ilford, he went to Mayfield School in Dagenham. His mum suggested he signed up to a youth theatre. That's how he got to understand what theatre was all about.

Russeni took A Levels and BTEC at school. Theatre Royal Stratford East's Youth Theatre Tutor, Carlos (a Black tutor) really empowered him, and he progressed through the Youth Theatre to the Poets' Lab. This was part of a new initiative by the Theatre to encourage the spoken word performances in which the young were readily engaging. A professional tutor in spoken word was brought in to assist develop and enhance the growth of the students in the Poets' Lab.

Russeni applied to Middlesex University for a 3 year Applied Performing Arts course and was accepted but decided not to go. By this time, he was already actively performing and working in the theatre front of house.

Drama schools he was aware of: E15, Central, and Mount View came to mind initially. After thinking further, he mentioned LAMDA and RADA, which he said were the heavy hitters. Russeni also mentioned The National Youth Theatre, and that the Young Vic and Roundhouse have encouraging provisions for young people.

Spoken word is his forte, and he has been working professionally for two years without an agent. He was sometimes gigging for free but has now stopped doing free shows. You must look at the benefits of doing a show for free, and he will always weigh up the pros and cons, otherwise the bills won't get paid. He has his CV and is now looking to be signed up with an agent. He feels now is the time to put the rest of his career in place, rather than just waiting for bookings through word of mouth.

Talawa, the National, the Young Vic, the Bush, the Royal Court and Peacock Theatre are venues he goes to regularly to see shows and look at how other performers are working to be able to hone his craft. You need to see theatre; you need to be on your game. But this can get extremely expensive, so you have to be able grab opportunities to see shows when you can.

Russeni likes working with young people, which enables him to know what the topics are on the street. He has created many templates for workshop delivery. He is a freelance practitioner and works in schools when he is not performing.

The arts are like a marathon. We must be Mo Farrah, not Usain Bolt. You have to remember: be up on your game, be proactive, don't get stale.

Teachers didn't mention drama at school, as a career or a way to go forward. Their attitude was that it is fun, but not a career. Working in all aspects of theatre has shown him many other avenues or career paths within the creative industries. Even if you're not on stage, there are many behind-the-scenes jobs that can turn into financially sustainable careers.

Russenen really believes that the arts play a big part in helping people with their mental health and wellbeing.

There is so much to learn in the theatre, and now he wants to pursue his acting career.

His perception of drama school is that it is a 50/50 experience. You could get lucky and find work straight out of the gate. But that is not the majority experience, and the bills have to be paid. So, he falls back on teaching and facilitating drama workshops. He does not have an agent, and the work he gets is from word of mouth recommendations. He enjoys working on youth theatre projects such as making a play in a week. He also works as a teaching assistant. It's a grind to be in the business and you need to find balance – to find something you enjoy as work and begin your career.

It's important to remember that one "no" doesn't mean "no" forever.

Russenen feels there should be more arts in schools, as the representation of BAME people in the arts is not good. They don't see themselves in the creative fields. The first introduction to theatre for children is panto, and that is accessible for them. TIE (Theatre In Education) shows on anti-bullying etc. are the next thing. Visual learning is what sticks in your memory. Plays and workshop after school can help to reach out to kids. It's good for them to have the opportunity to ask: "How did you get into this? What inspired you?"

We need more people to be adventurous and forward-thinking, and we need to show the arts in all its glory.

He did not find the drama school route appealing. He saw it as expensive from the start; even to get in you need the audition fees. Where do they expect young people to find that money just to audition? They lose the money; if you don't get in, you don't get the money back. You are in the red before you've even started the struggle. A lot of his friends didn't audition because they just couldn't afford it. If that's the first hurdle, how high will the next hurdles be?

*I was informed that drama schools operate as non-profitmaking organisations in that all surplus revenue is re-invested in facilities, staff or equipment. The audition fee directly pays for the staff and facilities associated with the audition process, and for many schools this includes extensive outreach work to geographically culturally or economically challenged areas.*

## Jacqui

Jacqui is of Nigerian, American, and St Lucian heritage. She is a spoken word/disabled actress from East London, and lives in Barking. She originally wanted to be a cardiologist. She studied Drama at Havering.



Opportunities have to be grabbed with both hands. She was writing own material and making audio recordings. There are very few accessible studios; she found one in Kings Cross. Funding can be tricky, especially if you are not under 25.

She wasn't supported to achieve her potential and was a shy child. Her mother decided to send her to a youth club and signed her up to an inclusive Drama Group at the Half Moon theatre, and that's when her creative journey started. Youth clubs were important when she was growing up, but over the years they have disappeared.

At school she was encouraged to get a "proper job", as the Arts were not perceived to be a proper job and the feeling was that you would end up starving. However, Jacqui saw other actors and was inspired. Drama took over, and she needed to focus on one thing. She was being told as a student that drama was not an option for her, and that they don't consider disabled actors. She began to follow her dream nonetheless, but found this a traumatising experience - even just trying to audition to get into drama school. At college she was told that you have to be very lucky, and even luckier if you are Black, because there are only two Black ethnic students picked each year to get into those institutions. So being Black and disabled was going to be a mountain to climb.

Jacqui was told she would have it a hundred times harder, but she did not want to settle with only playing a secretary because she's in a wheelchair. She wanted to have the opportunity to be cast fairly. She wanted to at some point play a villain, which would be her dream. To this day, she has never been offered roles of that calibre; the powers-that-be in casting have never had the vision. At drama school she was told that she should play characters that have a terminal illness.

Jacqui feels angry when she hears stories about how disabled people are viewed. There is a lot of ignorance around disabilities, and people are often unaware that there can be hidden disabilities.

When Jacqui thinks of drama schools, RADA, LAMDA, Talawa, and E15 come to mind. On many occasions people pointed to Talawa, saying, "There is a black company, they should look after you. They're your people." But the rebel in her challenged the situation and she did not just want to go down the Talawa route, especially as their short courses and holiday workshops were not accredited.

You have to pay for auditions to get into drama school. Why is this? It gets extremely expensive and it excludes you. If you do not have the financial resources to pay the audition fees, it becomes out of your reach.

She visited a lot of campuses but didn't see anybody that reflected her. She said she felt like she was in the movie *Get Out*.

She had visited Guildhall, but didn't apply. There was a weird energy when she visited, and it felt like everyone was looking at her, making her paranoid. That may be because she is black and disabled. Either way, it did not feel welcoming. It was not what was said, but how it was said.

Jacqui did apply for RADA; it was not a happy experience, and one she would not wish on her worst enemy.

Whenever she was attending an audition, she would get there an hour early, so she had enough time to acclimatise and make sure she knew where she was going and that it was accessible. For some auditions she may have even needed a carer/assistance.

Her RADA audition was missed because she arrived late, not through her own fault but because although she had notified the school of her access needs, when she arrived nobody seemed to know she was a disabled actress who would need assistance. She was asked to pay again in order to re-audition. While she was there somebody said to her face, “Maybe RADA is not for you”. Jacqui complained, but no action was taken. She said she felt like she had been alienated and that was the straw that broke the camel’s back. She decided that she would not be putting herself through it again.

Jacqui dropped drama for a while and it was a tough time, a hard pill to swallow. She started to believe that drama school was not for her. Then she took a course at Westminster college in Music Production and Business and achieved a degree. A career in the arts was still possible. The ups and downs are sometimes more stressful, but now she is glad she persevered, because she really loves it and it doesn’t feel like a job.

Jacqui will always champion the arts; everyone has to find their own path. She can’t tell people what their journey will be, because nothing is the same. The arts are different and unique, but the reality is that at the end of the day, bills have to be paid. As a freelancer she teaches music, poetry and drama anywhere and for anyone who books her. She has never had an agent and her work is from recommendations.

She has been on the Board of Graeae for 6 years and has learnt a lot from it. She feels more people of colour should be given the opportunity to be more involved in governance as it was extremely informative; the educational and business acumen that is required has also helped her in her career.

She had known a Black actor who went to LAMDA, and he told her he was the only one in his year. It was a foundation course and it was tough, but he stuck with it and completed the course.

After attending the Half Moon Youth Theatre, she was advised to sign up with Theatre Royal Stratford East Young people’s theatre and that transition was good. The Young People’s tutor took her through her paces. He told her from the start that there was no baby business when she was in the theatre and said he would treat her just like any of the other students. This was all she needed, and she rose to the challenge.

Jacqui took a course at Mountview, with the Graeae Theatre Company workshops. At the end of the workshop she was told to come back in a few years’ time. In panic, her first thoughts were, “Not again!”. They weren’t interested in how best they can support her but offered shifty excuses. “We have a lighting course you can go on”. They were trying to push her off her path, her dream, her journey. She was told that lighting/technical “would be the right course for you because you can sit down, so ideal.”

Jacqui was willing to talk openly about her experiences in the business. Her younger self would have feared being blacklisted and that it might harm her career or cause it to be stopped before it even began. She feels that there should be a forum to encourage more awareness for change. The people affected should have a platform and a voice. Now she has nothing to be afraid of.

Jacqui feels that big money is paid for consultations, but they always want the advice for free and that's why the system stays broken. There could be a panel discussion, to carry the voices forward. What's needed is open conversations and have our voices heard. Give and take is needed, and there may be an outcry of disgruntled voices, but the powers-that-be need to be open so they can make a change.

Jacqui truly loves the arts and will work in it regardless of what people say. You shouldn't let other people's perceptions determine what you can and can't do. People have made sacrifices, and there is no right or wrong way to be in the arts. "My life experience is different, and I have had a difficult kind of fight in my belly. Not all days are rainbows and unicorns, and you are allowed to cry, but don't cry about the same thing twice."

Her father used to impress on her that she will always need to work twice as hard to be average and three times as hard to be phenomenal. We don't do average; you have to be phenomenal.

*The problem is RADA and LAMDA are not inaccessible, but rather are unappealing to people from minority ethnic backgrounds. The challenge is not that RADA or LAMDA doesn't like Black students, it's that Black students don't like RADA and LAMDA*

*The institutions and conservatoires need to share best practice.*

## Conclusions

The landscape is changing but there is still a lot of work to do. Theatre activity is clustered around the core cities, particularly London, the M62 corridor, Birmingham and Bristol.

The National Youth Theatre recently auditioned across the country to seek out the most diverse, talented and vulnerable through an active audition programme. The students will then work with The National Youth Theatre until they reach the age of 26 performing and as theatre technicians.

It feels like more and more young people may try to enter the creative industries through non-traditional routes. There is no reach in the regions and more chance to get into the business if you come to London.

However, "the creative industries" is a large term and is not only about being on stage performing but also backstage, directing, lighting, producing, writing, designing, etc. These are less popular and not as many bells and whistles are being deployed to promote these other careers in the arts.

Setting up a forum for open discussions with targeted participants may help to provide a transparent way to look at what can be done for the future of BAME people wishing to enter the arts.

## Resources

The following resources provide useful context and background reading.

### ACE, Culture Change 2017

*How to find and grow diverse talent. Culture change guide.* Arts Council England, 2017.

[https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/How%20to%20find%20and%20grow%20diverse%20talent\\_0.pdf](https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/How%20to%20find%20and%20grow%20diverse%20talent_0.pdf)

*Developing meaningful apprenticeships, and work experience.* Arts Council England, 2017.

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Developing%20Meaningful%20Apprenticeships%2C%20Internships%20and%20Work%20Experience.pdf>

### Arts Bursaries Evaluation, Weston Jerwood, 2014-16

The Creative Bursaries programme is a talent development initiative which, through its two editions since 2010, has helped create 84 roles in 75 arts organisations nationally for graduates from low-income backgrounds. Providing these bursaries goes some way to making entry into the arts a level playing field and ensuring those with talent but without financial backing, are given the opportunity to succeed. In the process, the programme aims to embed diverse recruitment practices amongst the host organisations, share best practice across the sector about how to recruit as widely as possible to support inclusion at entry level, and have an impact on the diversity and vibrancy of our future arts workforce.

This evaluation focusses on the second edition, the Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries 2014-16 which ran from March 2015 to October 2016. 40 recent graduates undertook placements lasting between 6 and 12 months with 40 leading arts organisations across the UK.

33% (13) of participants self-identified as non-white.

60% (24) of participants had their contract extended or made permanent by their hosts.

78% (31) of participants were still known to be undertaking paid work in the arts/creative industries as of August 2017.

Of the 40 participants:

- 37 felt taking part in the programme had increased their commitment to working in the arts.
- 38 felt that the programme had improved their understanding of recruitment processes in the arts sector in general, and therefore increased their chances of securing work in the future.

- 32 felt the training sessions provided through the programme (via the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation Training Programme) were useful or very useful.
- 29 felt their mentoring sessions had been either useful or very useful.
- 36 plan to stay in touch with the networks formed through the programme.

<https://jerwoodarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Weston-Jerwood-Creative-Bursaries-2014-16-Evaluation-Report.pdf>

## National Scholarship Programme NSP Evaluation 2016

This report concludes the four-year evaluation of the National Scholarship Programme (NSP) by CFE Research and Edge Hill University on behalf of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The aim of the NSP was to provide a financial benefit to students from disadvantaged backgrounds entering higher education (HE) for the first time. In this regard the NSP has succeeded. Institutions agree that the NSP has been successful in reaching disadvantaged students. The NSP appears to have added value to existing forms of support and has generally not duplicated existing financial aid or displaced widening participation activity.

However, the evaluation suggests that the NSP (and financial support more broadly) had a limited impact upon student access to HE. Demand for the NSP outstripped supply. The majority of institutions had to apply local eligibility criteria, and up-front guarantees of entitlement were not possible in most cases. As a result, students often did not know whether they would receive an NSP award until they were enrolled on a course. The possibility of receiving financial aid, therefore, would have had little influence over decision-making for the majority of students. If financial aid is to be used to encourage access to HE, it is essential that students have access to comprehensive information, at the point at which they begin to make decisions about HE, about what they can expect to receive.

Two-fifths of NSP award recipients reported that the prospect of receiving financial aid had influenced their decision about whether to study at HE a lot. Yet research with potential students and in-depth interviews with a subsample of recipients suggests some degree of post-hoc rationalization and indicates that many would have progressed to HE anyway. Students need to feel confident that they can finance their studies, but the increase in fees does not appear to have deterred disadvantaged students from attending university. The NSP alone is unlikely to be sufficient to affect decisions about HE, but in combination with other, more substantial support (in particular the tuition fee loans and maintenance grants) it can make a difference.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

- Financial aid initiatives should be clear about their intended purpose and desired outcome – whether this is to widen access, improve retention, support student wellbeing or something else – and key beneficiary groups.

- A financial aid scheme with the specific aim to widen access might be best delivered as a national entitlement that is guaranteed to students who meet certain criteria and is uniformly delivered across institutions.
- Financial aid schemes to support student retention, success, wellbeing and enhance the student experience should be devolved to institutions to design and deliver, giving maximum flexibility to ensure it meets their particular priorities and students' needs.
- Future financial aid schemes should strongly consider offering support in the form of cash. Some students may also benefit from support with budgeting and managing their finances.
- There is an argument for spreading financial aid across all years of study. The ideal payment profile is likely to vary by course. Students may need larger amounts in later years to allow them to focus on their studies and/or meet additional costs only incurred in the final year, such as for a final show or exhibition. Similarly, some courses have substantial upfront costs.
- Future financial aid initiatives should consider providing enhanced support for students whose study and living costs are likely to be higher than other students due to the need to purchase materials or other requirements, and/or weighting the financial aid towards the final year.
- Further research to understand the financial support needs of part-time and mature students is required, including the extent to which lack of financial aid and/or cost has led to the decline in participation among this group. Further consideration should then be given to developing financial support packages that are tailored to meeting the needs of mature and part-time students.
- Institutions should be encouraged to evaluate the impact of their targeted financial aid schemes, so a fuller understanding of what works, in what context, and with which groups of students is developed. The feasibility of establishing a comparison should be explored, for example through the use of individual-level data held by HEFCE.
- HEFCE may wish to consider making local evaluations a requirement of any future funding. Again, methods that include comparison groups should be considered. This has implications for how initiatives are designed and implemented, for example by piloting approaches initially in some institutions only.

[https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/25232/1/2016\\_nspeval\\_y4.pdf](https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/25232/1/2016_nspeval_y4.pdf)

## Rethinking Relationships

Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations. Phase 1 Report. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2017.

Case studies show that arts organisations with a civic role share common features. They are dedicated to artistic excellence and fostering individual creativity. They have inspiring leaders, committed to a civic role. People and local communities are central to their practice. Place matters. Developing relationships and strong connections are central to their approach. They seek to integrate their work with communities into their artistic programmes.

But there are challenges. We lack a common language and classification system for the civic role. Leaders appear overstretched and under-supported. Co-production with communities requires particular skills: producers, curators and artists may require additional training and support. Approaches to funding and evaluation can make sustaining civic work difficult. Participants and staff groups both need to reflect the communities in which they work.

In a report published in 2016, the Social Mobility Commission concludes that in the UK, “for this generation of young people in particular, it [social mobility] is getting worse not better”. That report also suggested that it is not just the poorest in society who face barriers to progress. Other research demonstrates that children’s life chances are significantly affected by the quality of cultural education they receive: “After-school music and drama lessons, and trips to the theatre or concerts, provide access to cultural capital that can matter as much as academic achievement in ‘getting on’ later in life.” Middle-class families deploy this cultural capital to give their children an advantage and to increase their employability as adults.

The Gulbenkian research identifies the characteristics and operating principles that tend to be shared by arts organisations who have a strong civic role. They:

- demonstrate strong and effective leadership and governance. The civic is part of the DNA of their directors. It is not an ‘add on’. It is how they deliver great art. Their boards of trustees are fully committed to the civic and engaged in creating links with other local civic organisations.
- are rooted in local needs. These organisations understand their role in their localities. They are aware of and respond to opportunities to work with other community partners, including those from other sectors to meet local needs.
- develop community agency. The local community plays a significant role in determining the artistic programme.
- build capability. These organisations are effective in developing community skills, capabilities and creativity.
- build social capital. Significant volunteering opportunities are often provided. Sometimes these organisations focus on encouraging kindness, empathy and understanding of others.
- champion artistic quality. This is quality in both process and in artistic output. These organisations tend to believe that, to have a positive social impact, the art produced must be of the highest possible quality.



- champion diversity. They aspire to fully represent their communities, to tell untold stories and to give a platform to people and issues which may often be ignored or insufficiently recognised.
- provide challenge. They encourage discussion and debate, often on difficult issues. They challenge prevailing orthodoxies and ways of working.
- are open and reflective. They engage in ongoing reflection and dialogue and are open to challenge.

<http://civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Civic-Role-of-Arts-Phase-1-REPORT-SINGLE-PAGES-5-7-17.pdf>